DIGITAL MARKETING FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZED TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY ENTERPRISES

Edited by Salih Kuşluvan and Karel Van Isacker

DETAY YAYINCILIK

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digitourism

Edited by Salih Kuşluvan and Karel Van Isacker

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Preface

This book is the result of an Erasmus+ project (2019-1-TR01-KA204-074619) supported by the European Commission and the Turkish National Agency. The aim of the project is to develop digital marketing competences of current/potential employees, managers and entrepreneurs of small and medium sized tourism and hospitality businesses. It provides a basic introduction to digital marketing for tourism and hospitality businesses for the novice digital marketers. It targets those readers who have no background in marketing, digital marketing or web development. For this reason, more emphasis is given to the conceptual explanations and principles rather than practical aspects of digital marketing. We hope that this book will benefit tourism and hospitality management students, employees, managers and owners of tourism and hospitality enterprises.

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Module 1: Marketing Principles and Digital Marketing Strategy for Small and Medium Sized Tourism Enterprises

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Learning Objectives

After reading this unit, the reader will be able to:

- define marketing and related concepts;
- understand exchange system and the role of marketing in society;
- know components of tourism system and meaning of tourism marketing;
- outline basic steps in the marketing process for tourism and hospitality businesses;
- explain market segmentation, market targeting and positioning within the context marketing of tourism and hospitality businesses;
- remember components of marketing mix in the marketing of tourism and hospitality businesses;
- define and identify key elements of digital marketing strategy for tourism and hospitality businesses.

1.0 Introduction

In order to understand digital marketing, there is a need to have a basic understanding of the concepts and principles of marketing in general. This module introduces basic marketing concepts and principles, and explain marketing process and components of digital marketing strategy as applied to tourism and hospitality businesses.

1.1 Marketing and Market Orientation

Marketing is often a misunderstood and misused concept by majority of people. Most of the time it is equated with hard selling, advertising, transporting products from producers to consumers, promoting goods and services, and even deceiving and manipulating people to sell products or to get positive response from the target group. In fact, marketing has nothing to do with deceiving and manipulating people, hiding

and exaggerating facts, lying or hard pushing to sell goods and services, although some sellers or producers may actually engage in such activities in reality, which may be labelled as marketing incorrectly. Actually, **marketing** is about learning the needs, wants, problems and expectations of people, organisations and society; and creating and delivering value (benefits) to meet such wants, needs and expectations and solve their problems efficiently; and capturing value in return through exchange process (Kotler and Armstrong, 2018). The following three definitions capture the essence of marketing:

Marketing is 'the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably'. (Chartered Institute of Marketing, 2020, p.6).

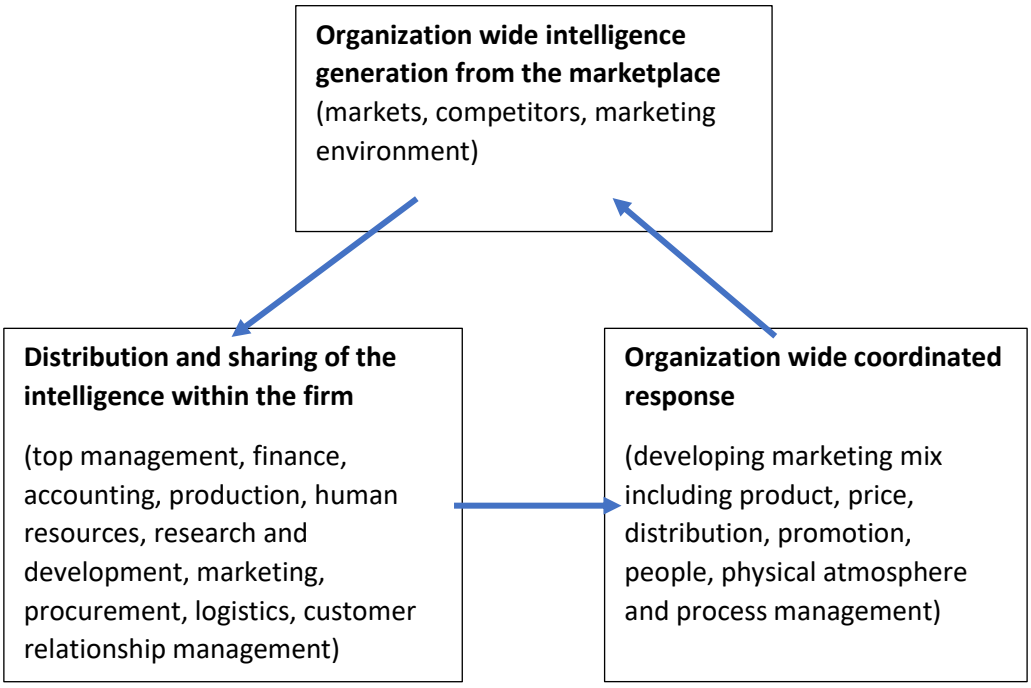
'Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large'. (American Marketing Association, 2017).

Marketing is 'the process by which companies engage customers, build strong customer relationships, and create customer value in order to capture value from customers in return' (Kotler et al., 2020, p. 6).

As these definitions attest, marketing is about identifying and predicting needs, wants and expectations of people, organisations and society and satisfying them through the creation and exchange of value efficiently, preferably better than the competition. Marketing is often confused with selling. **Selling** usually refers to transaction that involves an exchange of value and it is mostly the result of good marketing activities (Kotler and Keller, 2016). Another concept that is often used synonymously with marketing is advertising. **Advertising** means 'any paid form of nonpersonal communication about an organization, product, service, or idea by an identified sponsor' (Belch and Belch, 2018, p.17). Although advertising is part of marketing, it is only the tip of the marketing iceberg. Marketing is more than paid form of communication and it includes determining and predicting consumer's needs, wants, and expectations; designing products and creating value to meet these needs and wants; pricing products, communicating with consumers; delivering products to consumers; and investigating consumer behaviour after the purchase and consumptions of products. Marketing is also confused with distribution. **Distribution**

is about 'making a good or service available for use or consumption by the consumer' (Kotler and Armstrong, 2018, p. 359). Distribution, like advertising, is a part of marketing activity, but it does not cover most of marketing activities. Finally, marketing is equated with **deceiving, lying, manipulating, creating false impressions and unnecessary needs** in order to sell goods and services. Although there may be businesses and people doing such acts under the name of marketing, these activities are neither legal nor moral and they are not within the scope of modern marketing.

Figure 1: Elements of Market Orientation

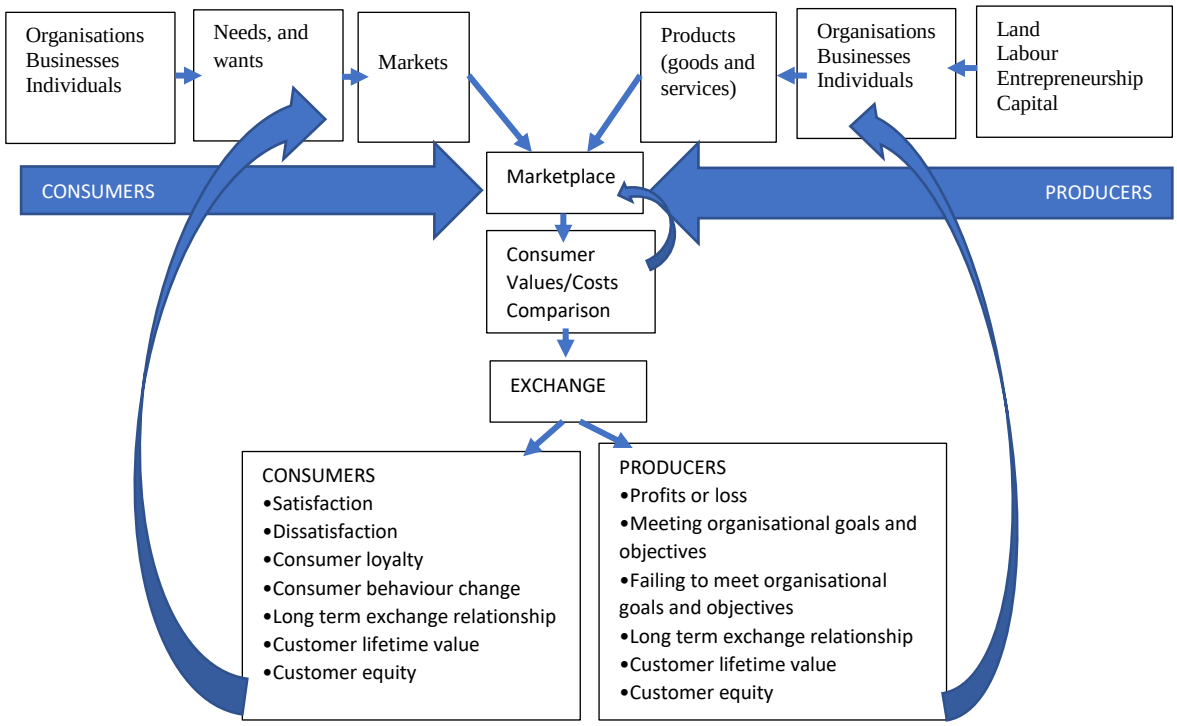

Organization wide intelligence generation from the marketplace (markets, competitors, marketing environment)
Distribution and sharing of the intelligence within the firm
(top management, finance, accounting, production, human resources, research and development, marketing, procurement, logistics, customer relationship management)
Organization wide coordinated response
(developing marketing mix including product, price, distribution, promotion, people, physical atmosphere and process management)

Source: Kohli & Jaworski, 1990

The practice of modern marketing is known as market orientation or market driven approach. In other words, businesses that adopt modern marketing implement market orientation and are market driven. Market orientation has three components (Figure 1) (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). First, market-oriented firms gather organization wide information regarding current and future customer needs, and dynamic marketing environment including competitors. Second, the collected information is shared by all the departments of the firm. Finally, based on the shared information, the firm prepares an organization wide coordinated response by preparing a marketing mix to meet customer needs and align with changes in the marketing environment. Marketing mix is marketing tools used by tourism and hospitality organisations to meet visitors' needs,

wants and expectations or solve their problems and satisfy them. Marketing mix covers the blend of product, price, place, promotion, physical atmosphere, people and process. These circular activities of market orientation are undertaken continuously, profitably and long-term view is adopted (Narver & Slater, 1990). Firms can also adopt market-driving approach where they strive to influence the structure and behaviour of the market to enhance their competitive position through innovation and provision of extraordinary value (Kumar, Scheer & Kotler, 2000; Jaworsky, Kohli, & Sahay, 2000).

Figure 2: Exchange System in Society



1.2 Exchange System in Society and Function of Marketing

Since marketing is about understanding needs and wants and meeting them through the exchange of value, there is a need to understand the general elements and process of exchange. Figure 2 shows the exchange systems in society. One part of the exchange system is composed of consumers. All individuals, organisations and businesses have their own needs, wants, problems or expectations as consumers in society. Individuals have needs and wants to survive and live comfortably. Organizations and businesses have needs and wants to produce products, continue

their operations and to serve people. Needs are ‘states of felt deprivation’, (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018, p.6). Human needs are a natural part of human biology, psychology or social life. Wants are ‘the forms that needs take’ (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018, p.6) and they are shaped by personality, society, environment of the individuals. People, organisations and businesses with needs, wants and buying power form markets, that is consumer and organisational markets. Markets are potential and actual consumers. Because markets do not have ability or resources.to produce all the goods and services they require on their own, they need to rely on producers to provide them. The other part of the exchange system are producers. Using factors of production, producers including individuals, businesses and organisations produce products to meet needs and wants of the markets. **A product** is anything, tangible or intangible or a mixture of both, that provides value and satisfy markets’ needs, wants and expectations or solve their problems. A product is bought and used in return for money or something of value. Products can be goods and services. **A good** is a physical product and has tangible attributes. **A service** is an intangible deed, process and performance that provide benefits to consumers (Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler, 2017). Ideas, persons, organisations and places can also be thought of as products that can provide value to people and organisations. Markets and products come across in the **marketplace** where buyers and sellers of a product meet, communicate and transact (Figure 2). Marketplaces may be a local market consisting of a geographical and physical space, a shopping mall, over the phone or an online platform (websites, social media, etc.). Markets or consumers make a comparison of values and costs of products while choosing among the many products that may satisfy their needs and wants and decide which products they will buy. **Consumer values** here denotes consumption values and refer to all the benefits consumers perceive from buying, using or having the product. On the other hand, **costs** cover all the sacrifices including prices or monetary value of the goods and services (also called exchange value), time, psychological and behavioural costs that have to be endured for buying, having or using products. Of course, this is a very rational mode of decision making, and people and organisations are not always rational when purchasing products. Consumers may base their product choice on emotions, social learning from others (modelling others), influence of marketing communications, impulse, habits etc. At the end of evaluation of values and costs each product alternative, exchange may take place or consumers consider and evaluate some other products in the marketplace (Figure 2). If exchange

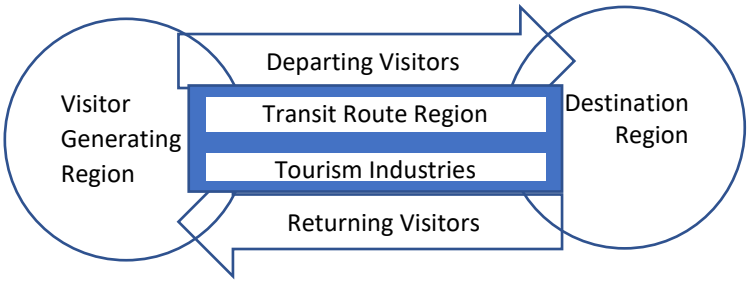
take place different consequences emerge for consumers and producers. Producers can make profits or bear loss if they are commercial businesses or organisations. They can reach their objectives and goals if they are non-profit organisations or government entities or they may fail to reach their objectives and goals. On the other hand, consumers may be satisfied or dissatisfied. **Customer satisfaction** refers to meeting or exceeding consumers' expectations concerning a good or service (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012). If consumers are satisfied, they are likely to be loyal to the business that provide the satisfying product. **Customer loyalty** is about buying the product again, buying other products from the same business, suggesting the products to others and spreading positive word of mouth (good publicity) about the product. Also, if consumers are satisfied, long term exchange relationship is likely to develop between a producer and consumer and such relationship gives rise to customer lifetime value. **Customer lifetime value** is 'the value of the entire stream of purchases a customer makes over a lifetime of patronage' (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018, p.44). Customer lifetime value gives rise to **customer equity** which is 'the total combined customer lifetime values of all of the company's customers' (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018, p.45). The role of marketing in the exchange system in society is to make the exchange process easier and seamless for both producers and consumers by sensing the needs and wants of the consumers (individual and organisational markets); meeting or exceeding their expectations or solving their problems by way of creating, communicating and delivering value with the right marketing mix; receiving value in return, and maintaining long term relationship with the customers.

1.3 Tourism System and Tourism Marketing

Since this module is about marketing for tourism and hospitality businesses, it is convenient to see the nature of tourism system and the role of marketing. Despite occasional crises and fluctuations, tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world. Tourism is defined as 'the activity of visitors taking a trip to a main destination outside their usual environment, for less than a year, for any main purpose, including business, leisure or other personal reasons, other than to be employed by a resident entity in the place visited' (Eurostat, 2010, p.8). Figure 3 shows the components of the tourism system. There are 5 components of tourism system (Figure 3). **Tourist generating region** refers to the place where potential visitors

normally work and reside (United Nations, 2010). '**A visitor** is a traveller taking a trip to a main destination outside his/her usual environment for less than a year, for any main purpose (business, leisure or other personal purpose) other than to be employed by a resident entity in the country or place visited (United Nations, 2010, p.10). Visitors may be tourists who stay overnight in the place visited or excursionist or same day visitors. **Destination region** is the geographical place visited by visitors because of attractive features or attractions. **Transit route region** refers to the geographical place between tourist generating and destination region. Finally, **tourism industries** represent the industries whose main activity comprises of providing goods and services directly to visitors (United Nations, 2010).

Figure 3: Components of Tourism System



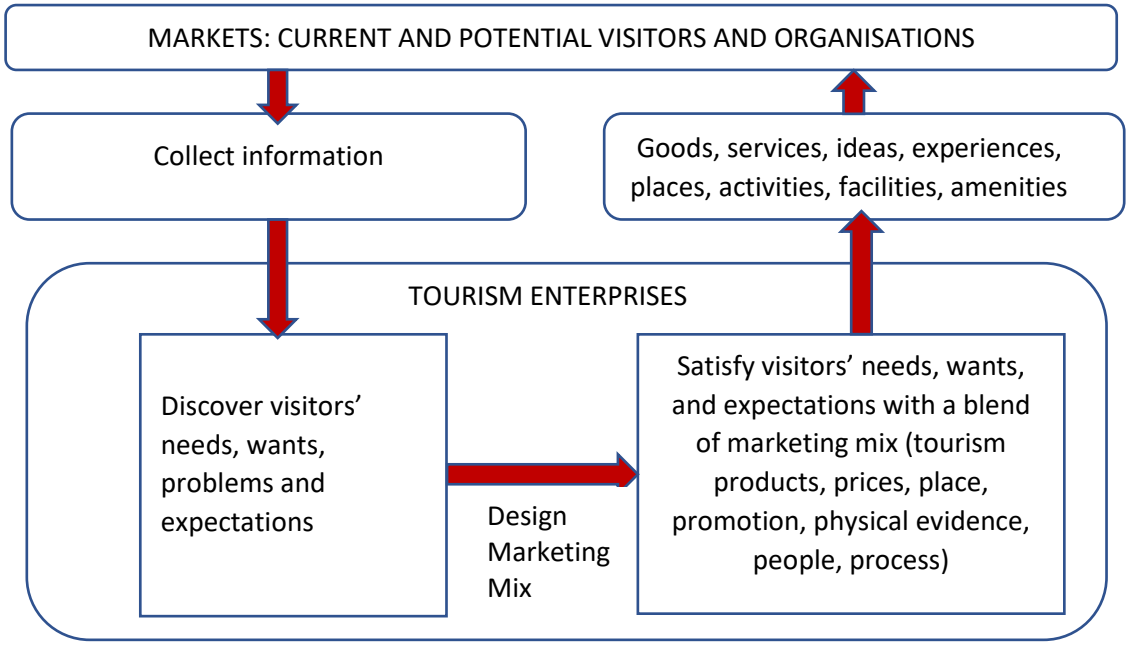
Environments: Socio-cultural, economic, technological, physical, political, legal

Source: Leiper, 1979.

Tourism industries consist of travel organisers or travel trade such as travel agents, online travel agents, tour operators, specialty channelers (meeting and convention planners, incentive travel firms, corporate travel offices etc.); transportation industry (air, land, sea and railways, car rentals); accommodation industry; food and beverage industry; attractions, events and activities industries, souvenirs, and gift retailing industries; and other retailers serving visitors. **Tourism enterprises** are defined as businesses whose main activity involves providing goods and services, wholly or to a great extent, directly to visitors (United Nations, 2010). Marketing in tourism involves designing, pricing, distributing, promoting and providing products, facilities, attractions, events and experiences that meet the needs and wants of visitors. In other words, **tourism marketing** for tourism businesses means all the activities

done to design, create, communicate and deliver value to, and have long term exchange relationship with, visitors and

Figure 4: Basic Marketing for Tourism and Hospitality Businesses


MARKETS: CURRENT AND POTENTIAL VISITORS AND ORGANISATIONS
Collect information
Goods, services, ideas, experiences, places, activities, facilities, amenities
TOURISM ENTERPRISES
Discover visitors' needs, wants, problems and expectations
Design Marketing Mix
Satisfy visitors' needs, wants, and expectations with a blend of marketing mix (tourism products, prices, place, promotion, physical evidence, people, process)

Source: Adapted from Kerin, Hartley & Rudelius, 2017, p. 9.

stakeholders. The marketing function of tourism businesses is to research visitor's needs, wants, problems and expectations and satisfy them with a blend of marketing mix (see Figure 4). Majority of businesses in tourism and hospitality are micro, small and medium sized enterprises in many destinations in Europe. Small and medium sized enterprises are businesses with less than 250 employees or an annual turnover of EUR 50 million (European Commission, 2020a). Businesses with less than 10 employees or an annual turnover of EUR 2 million are considered micro enterprises (European Commission, 2020a). It is estimated that 90% of tourism and hospitality businesses are small, medium and micro sized enterprises (European Commission, 2020b). SMTEs often lack financial and human resources to market themselves to geographically dispersed markets in different countries. But digital marketing offers SMTEs many opportunities to market themselves in different markets and countries cost effectively.

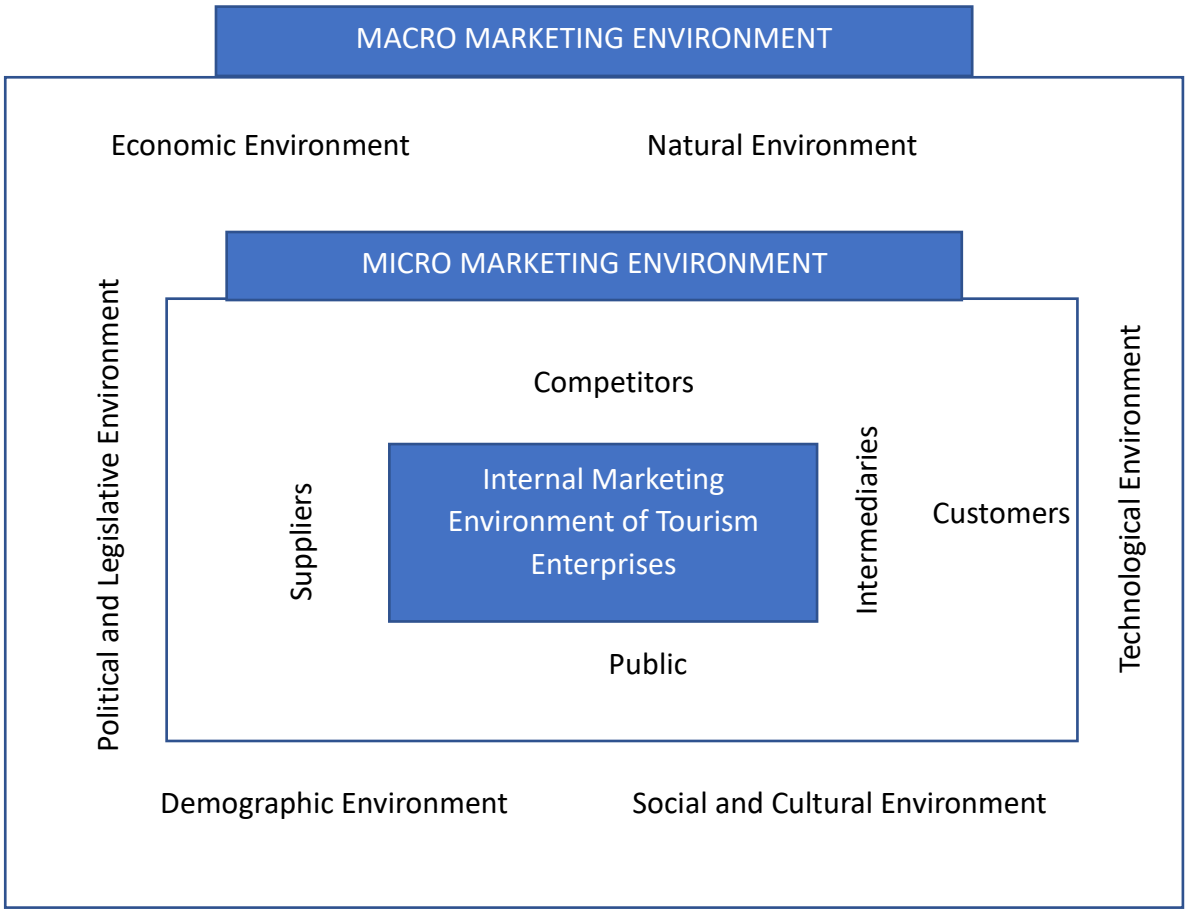
1.4 An Overview of Marketing Process for Tourism Businesses

Like all businesses, tourism, and hospitality enterprises big or small go through a marketing management process to serve visitors and promote exchange. Basically, marketing process can be examined in 5 broad steps: 1) Analysing the situation or marketing environment; 2) Determining marketing goals and objectives; 3) Designing marketing strategy; 4) Implementing marketing strategy and 5) Evaluation and control (Lamb, Hair & McDaniel, 2018; Kerin, Hartley & Rudelius, 2017).

1.4.1 Analysing the Situation (Marketing Environment)

Marketing process starts with analysis of the current situation and marketing environment of tourism and hospitality businesses. Marketing environment consists of all the factors and forces that have an influence on the marketing activities and successful exchange relationship of tourism and hospitality businesses with domestic or international visitors (Kotler and Armstrong, 2018). In the process of situation analysis, information regarding trends and changes in the marketing environment of tourism and hospitality businesses is gathered and used to interpret its effects on marketing activities of tourism enterprises. Marketing environment is divided into internal and external marketing environment and external marketing environment is categorised as micro and macro external marketing environment (Figure 4). Internal marketing environment comprises all the departments of a tourism enterprise other than marketing (for example rooms division, food and beverage, laundry, accounting and finance, human resources, information systems, etc. for a hotel). Micro marketing environment is composed of factors that are close to the tourism enterprises and influence marketing activities directly whereas macro marketing environment are the factors that influence production and consumption of goods and services in general (Figure 5) (Kotler and Armstrong, 2018).

Figure 5: Macro and Micro Environment of Marketing



Source: Kotler and Armstrong, 2018.

The aim of the situational analysis is to scan and gather information and analyse the internal and external marketing environment of the tourism and hospitality businesses. The end results of the situation analysis are to do a strength and weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis and reveal marketing opportunities. Strengths and weaknesses are unearthed by analysing internal marketing environment or the organisation itself and opportunities and threats are revealed by analysing micro and macro external

Table 1: SWOT Analysis Table

	FAVORABLE	UNFAVORABLE
INTERNAL FACTORS	STRENGHTS	WEAKNESSES
Marketing Mix: Product, price, distribution, marketing communication, physical evidence, people, processes		
Management		
Human Resources		
Finance-Accounting		
Production-Operation		
Technology		
Research and Development,		
Marketing Performance: Sales, profits, market share, customer satisfaction, loyalty and complaints		
	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATHS
EXTERNAL FACTORS		
Social-Cultural Environment		
Markets		
Competitors and Competitive Environment		
Technological Environment		
Economic Environment		
Political and Legislative Environment		
Natural Environment		
Suppliers		
Intermediaries		
Public		

Source: Adapted from Berkowitz, Kerin, Hartley and Rudelius, 1997.

environment. An internal marketing analysis assesses main physical, financial and human resources, past marketing performance, costs, core capabilities and skills, competitive advantages, available technology, organizational structure, culture and values and strengths and weaknesses of the internal environment that may influence marketing activities of the organisation. External marketing environment evaluates tourism enterprises' current and future visitors and competitors, and other changes in

economic, technological, legal, social and cultural environment. At the end of internal and external analysis, a SWOT matrix is prepared. A SWOT matrix identifies the strength and weaknesses relating to internal factors and opportunities and threats in the external environment (Table 1). Tourism and hospitality businesses should take advantage of strengths and opportunities, reduce weaknesses and avoid threats for creating value and promoting exchange (Kerin, Hartley & Rudelius, 2017). Situation analysis gives a picture of where the tourism enterprise is and what the opportunities and threats are for creating and exchanging value in the tourism industries.

1.4.2 Determining Marketing Goals and Objectives

Next step in the marketing process is setting marketing goals and objectives. Marketing goals and objectives are the results tourism organisations want to achieve through marketing activities. Marketing goals are general but marketing objectives are more specific and measurable and time based. For example, increasing occupancy rate for a hotel is a goal, but increasing occupancy rate from 80% in 2020 to 85% in 2021 is an objective. Marketing goals and objectives should be aligned with tourism enterprises' general goals and objectives. Marketing objectives should be specific, measurable, assignable, realistic and time-based (Table 2).

Table 2: Characteristics of Marketing Objectives

SPECIFIC	• Target a specific area for improvement.
MEASURABLE	• Quantify or at least suggest an indicator of progress.
ASSIGNABLE	• Specify who will do it.
REALISTIC	• State what results can realistically be achieved, given available resources.
TIME-BASED	• Specify when the result(s) can be achieved.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMART_criteria

Marketing goals and objectives indicate where tourism businesses want to be in the near future. Most tourism and hospitality businesses use the following criteria or performance indicators for determining marketing goals and objectives:

- Total sales.
- Total revenues or profits.
- Customer satisfaction.
- Employee satisfaction.
- Customer loyalty (returning visitors).
- Reducing customer complaints.
- Costs.
- Market share.
- Number of visitors.
- Number of nights spent.
- Occupancy rate (rooms occupied in a period / total rooms available in a period).
- Pax (number of passengers, guests).
- Number of package tours sold.
- Revenues per available room (room revenues / number of rooms).
- Average room rate or average daily rate (total room revenues earned / total number of rooms occupied).
- Passenger load factor (distance x number of passengers / distance x number of seats).
- Average spending per visitor.
- Positive online reviews and feedback.
- Brand awareness.

1.4.3 Designing Marketing Strategy

The third phase of marketing process is about designing marketing strategy. Simply, strategy is a plan of action to achieve certain goals and objectives. Marketing strategy refers to the ways, methods and means of reaching marketing goals and objectives. It is about how tourism and hospitality firms reach their goals and objectives and what tools they use. There are four components of marketing strategy: 1)

segmenting markets 2) selecting target markets, 3) positioning in the target market and 4) designing marketing mix.

1.4.3.1 Segmenting Markets

In the context of tourism, target markets are the customers that tourism and hospitality businesses want to provide goods and services and have a long-term exchange relationship. Target markets may be current and potential visitors or organisations that are likely to be interested in tourism businesses' products. In order to select target markets, whole market should be divided into market segments. **Market segmentation** is the process of dividing heterogenous consumers into similar groups in terms of needs, wants, demographics, buying behaviour etc. Market segments have common or similar characteristics in terms of needs, wants, expectations, problems, demographics, buying and consumption patterns. In the tourism industry, two broad categories of markets are visitor market and organisational tourism market. **Visitor or tourist market** is the end users of products of tourism businesses whereas **organisational tourism markets** are the businesses, governments and non-governmental organisations that want to use, buy or sell the products of tourism businesses. Visitor market can be segmented based on a number of criteria which are explained below (Kerin, Hartley and Rudelius, 2017; Pride and Ferrell, 2018).

1-Segmentation Based on Purpose of Visit and Travel Motivations: Visitors are sorted into similar groups based on their purpose of visit and travel motivations. Personal purpose of visit includes leisure, recreation and holidays, visiting friends and relatives, education and training, health and medical care, religion and pilgrimages, shopping, transit and others (United Nations, 2010). Business and professional purpose of visit may include participating in congress meetings and conventions, participating in fairs and exhibitions, incentive travel, individual business trips, and taking professional courses and training.

2-Geographic Segmentation: In this type of market segmentation, visitors are divided into homogenous groups based on the geography they normally live. These geographic regions may be continents, regions, countries, provinces, cities, towns, districts and even streets.

3-Demographic Segmentation: Objective variables such as age, sex, personal income, education, family life cycle, marital status, occupation, nationality, religion, ethnic origin and population and population density are used to group visitors into identical groups.

4-Psychocraphic Segmentation: It involves grouping visitors according to the social class, personality (dependable, near dependable, mid-centric, near venturer, venturer (Plog, 2002) and lifestyles (activities, interests, hobbies, opinions, habits, values and attitudes).

5-Behavioural Segmentation: Behavioural segmentation is the process of dividing visitors or guests into distinct groups based on the consumption behaviour they exhibit in relation to the tourism product or the tourism enterprise. Travel organisation, benefits and activities sought during the holiday, purchasing behaviour, distribution channels used, user status, loyalty, and usage frequency are some of the variables to group visitors or guests behaviourally in tourism and hospitality.

Organisational tourism markets consist of tourism and non-tourism related businesses, public sector organisations and non-governmental organisations that want to buy or resell tourism enterprises' product. Bases for segmenting organisational tourism markets may involve the following criteria:

1-Type of organisation and field of activity (i.e., tour operators, online travel agents, travel agents, airlines, public organisations, non-governmental organisations etc.);

2-Geographic region of the organisational tourism markets (i.e., tour operators in the UK, OTAs that are dominant in Russia etc.);

3- Market size of organisational tourism markets (i.e., tour operators that buy 30% of rooms of a hotel);

4-Organisational tourism markets' purpose of use or buying of tourism products (i.e., reselling tourism products, buying tourism products to integrate with other products).

1.4.3.2 Selecting Target Markets

Once the general visitor or organisational tourism market is divided into homogenous groups or segments, then the tourism enterprise decides which markets to serve and selects target markets. There are four main market targeting strategies

that tourism businesses may follow when selecting market segments (Kerin, Hartley and Rudelius, 2017; Pride and Ferrell, 2018).

1-Mass Marketing (Undifferentiated Marketing) Strategy: This strategy is also known as undifferentiated marketing strategy. The tourism business targets the whole market with a single marketing mix ignoring differences of market segments. For example, a hotel may serve to the mass market who need accommodation with a basic bed and breakfast service in a specific location.

2-Differentiated (Multisegmented) Marketing Strategy: Tourism businesses select different market segments with different marketing mixes. Target market selection may be extensive or selective. For example, a hotel chain may have brands and properties that may target high, medium, and low-income travellers. A resort hotel may serve to meetings, incentives, congress and events market (MICE), sports market and sea-sand-sun seekers.

3-Concentrated Marketing (Niche Marketing) Strategy: In this strategy, tourism businesses divide the market into segments, but they only target single market segment using one marketing mix. For example, a fine dining restaurant may target only the affluent and high-income visitors.

4- Micro (Mass Customisation) Marketing Strategy: Tourism businesses tailor marketing mix to individual customer tastes and preferences. For example, a tour operator may design and organise a package tour in line with an individual tourists' travel expectations and experiences sought.

1.4.3.3 Positioning in the Target Market

The position of a tourism business, brand or individual tourism product in marketing refers to the place it occupies in the mind of the consumer (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012). Positioning in tourism marketing is about marketing activities directed towards the creation of distinct and superior identity and image of a tourism enterprise or its product in the mind of potential visitors. Through positioning, tourism and hospitality businesses offer set of benefits or values a company promises to deliver to customers to satisfy their needs and wants or solve their problems. Creation of a distinct, valuable, memorable, and inimitable position concerning tourism business or its products in the mind of visitors is seen as a marketing activity securing competitive

advantage in relation to competitors. There are many strategies that tourism and hospitality businesses can use to position their organisation and services. Main strategies are summarised below (Kırçova and Benli, 2013; Lamb, Hair and McDaniel, 2018).

1-Positioning based on the features or attributes of tourism product or tourism business such as location of a hotel.

2-Positioning based on the benefits and customer values tourism product or business provide to visitors such as low price, status, security, children's club etc.

3-Positioning based on comparison with the competitors' facilities, price, location etc.

4-Positioning based on price and quality such as low-price high quality or fair price fair quality.

5-Positioning based on the time of the use of the tourism product or business such and wintertime, weekend, honeymoon.

6-Positioning based on the users of the tourism product or business such as business professionals, families with children, people with special needs etc.

7-Positioning in relation to a product category such as traditional guest houses against modern hotels.

8-Positioning based on history, trust, and brand identity of a tourism business.

9-Positioning based on an emphasis of ethics, environment, and social causes such as energy saving, special services for disadvantaged people, protecting the environment.

1.4.3.4 Developing Marketing Mix in Tourism

Marketing mix in the tourism context refers to tools or means that destinations and tourism businesses use to meet visitors' needs, wants, expectations and solve their problems. In the marketing of tourism and hospitality services, marketing mix consists of a combination of product, price, place, promotion, physical evidence, people, and processes, also known as 7ps. These components of marketing mix are explained below.

1.4.3.4.1 Tourism Product

Tourism product is a complex and composite product consisting of all the goods, services and facilities used by a visitor. Tourism product consists of **total tourism product** and **individual tourism product** (Middleton, 1995). Total tourism product is 'a combination of tangible and intangible elements, such as natural, cultural and man-made resources, attractions, facilities, services and activities' that provide customer values and benefits to visitors during their tourism activity (World Tourism Organisation, 2022, p.19). It is the complex combination of all complementary goods, services, facilities, activities, experiences, natural and man-made historical and cultural resources visitors use or consume from the beginning to the end of a tourism activity. Total tourism product usually includes the following components (Buhalis, 2000; Ivanovic et al., 2009; Middleton, 1995).

1-Awareness and image of the destination: It refers to the thoughts, feelings, perceptions and mental picture of potential visitors with regard to a destination.

2-Availability of travel organization services and packages: Information about destination and tourism businesses, reservation services, assembling and packaging travel services (package tour), others services such as insurance, visa etc.

3-Attractions: It refers to natural or man-made resources and events that draw visitors to a particular destination.

4-Accessibility: Accessibility is the ease and convenience of traveling from the visitor generation regions to a visitor destination.

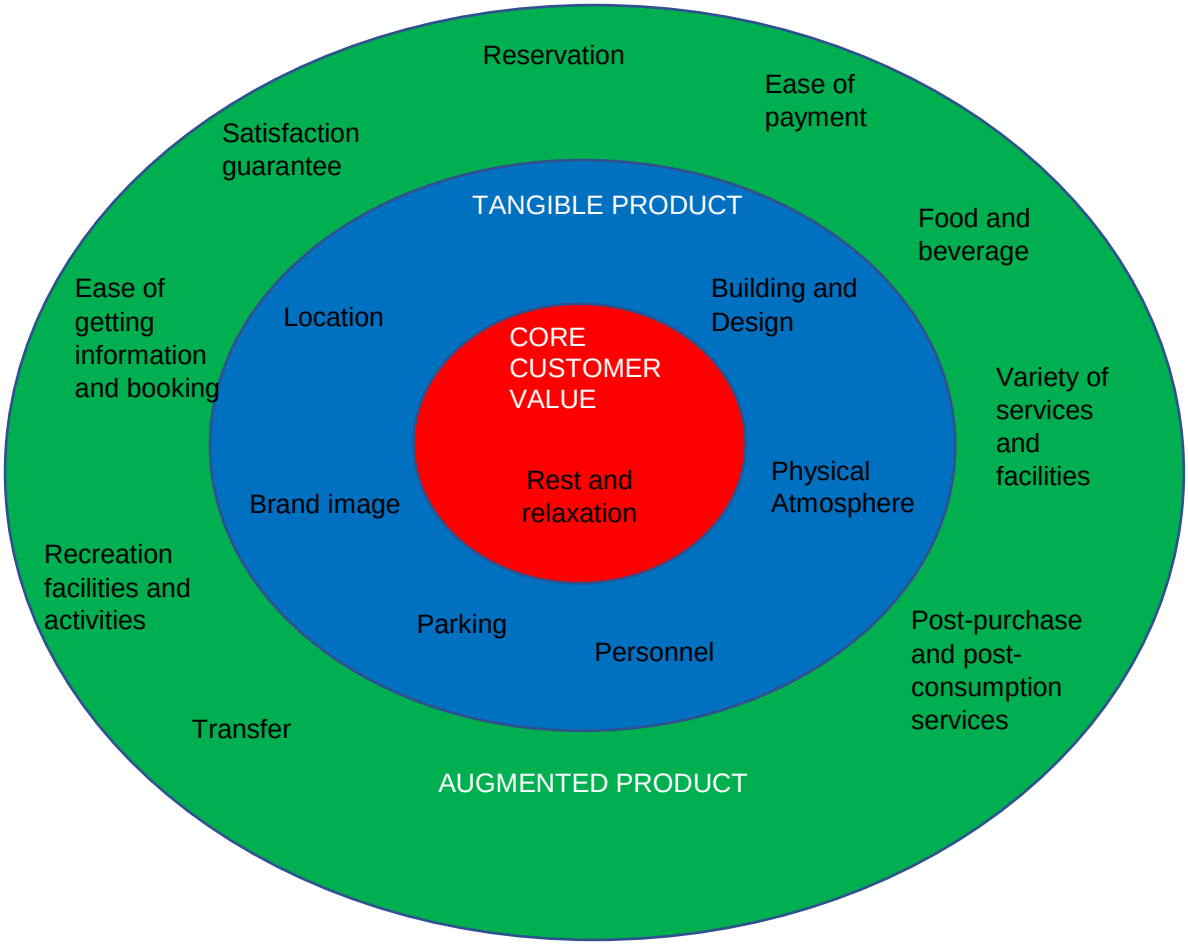
5-Amenities: Amenities refers to destination services (i.e., transportation, accommodation, food and beverage, entertainment, shopping and meeting facilities) necessary to meet the needs and wishes of visitors who are far from their homes.

6-Activities: It refers to active (i.e., golfing) or passive (i.e., sightseeing) activities that visitors do during their stay at the destination.

7-Ancillary services: Ancillary services are supporting services and infrastructure that facilitate the use of attractions and support the amenities and services of tourism enterprises. They include roads, airports, communication system, sewage system, security and health system etc.

8-Ambience (hospitality): Ambiance is the atmosphere of hospitality shown to visitors in the destination. It includes attitudes and behaviours of local people and service providers towards visitors. It is the hospitality culture and atmosphere of a destination.

Figure 6: Core Customer Value, Tangible and Augmented Products for a Hotel Service



Source: Adapted from Kotler et al., 2020.

On the other hand, **individual tourism product** refers to each good, service, activity and facility that make up the total tourism product. Individual tourism products like transportation and accommodation may be offered by individual tourism enterprises or public institutions. In order to compare it with competitive products, individual tourism products can be analysed in three layers including core customer value, tangible and augmented products (Kotler et.al., 2020). Figure 6 shows three layers of a hotel product as an example. These layers are explained below.

Core customer value: It expresses the basic functions and benefits of a product consumers seek. For example, a hotel room provides relaxation and rest for a traveller away from home.

Tangible (Real) product: It refers to the tangible and physical properties and designs of the product.

Augmented (Extended) Product: The are services that make it easier for the consumer to use the product and increase the attractiveness of the product.

1.4.3.4.2 Price

Price is the amount of money that must be paid to purchase and use a good or service (Kotler and Keller, 2016). It is the exchange value of a good or service. Sometimes price is used more broadly to refer to all the sacrifices made by consumers to get and benefit from a good or service. Price is critical both for tourism and hospitality businesses and visitors because of the factors explained below (Kusluvan, 1997).

Importance of Price for Tourism Businesses

- Price is the most important variable that determines and affects demand and quantity demanded.
- It is the most important factor that determines the competitive position, income and profitability of the business.
- Price is the most variable and flexible element of the marketing mix.
- Price is a strategic tool for competitiveness and building consumer value and long-term relationships.
- Price is associated with product quality and brand image.
- It is an important factor that determines the success or failure of the business in the market.
- Price may determine the rate at which a new product is adopted
- Pricing is affected by government intervention

Importance of Price for Visitors

- Price is one of the most important factors determining visitors' demand and choice of goods and services (especially middle and low income groups of visitors).

- Price affects visitors' perception and evaluation of the quality of a good or service.

Tourism and hospitality businesses use a mixture of costs, demand level, customer value and competition when determining prices of their product.

1.4.3.4.3 Place (Distribution)

In the context of marketing, place or distribution refers to the marketing activities done to ensure that products are made available for consumers' purchase, use or consumption (Kotler and Armstrong, 2018). Distribution is about bringing products and consumers together. Organisations involved in distributing products are called distribution channels. A distribution or marketing channel is 'a set of interdependent organizations involved in the process of making a product or service available for use or consumption by the consumer or business user' (Kotler et al., 2020, p. 355). Distribution channels help tourism and hospitality businesses to promote their organisations and connect with visitors. Distribution channels enable visitors to get information, make reservation and benefit from the services of tourism businesses. Distribution channels are critical for the success of tourism businesses. Because there is a physical distance between visitor generating regions and destinations/tourism businesses, tourism product is consumed mostly in destination regions with the presence of visitors, and tourism product cannot be stocked. These features imply that motivating and directing travellers to destinations and tourism businesses at the right time when the capacity and services of tourism businesses are ready and available for use is critical and that is the role of distribution channels.

There are two types of distribution system in tourism: direct and indirect distribution. In the case of direct distribution, the tourism business directs the visitors to its own business and products without the help of any independent intermediaries. The service provider is responsible for the distribution of its own product. Potential visitors purchase directly from the business providing the service. Tourism businesses provide information directly to consumers, making it easier for consumers to book and purchase. In the case of indirect distribution, Tourism business uses intermediaries to direct visitors to its business and products. There is an online or offline intermediary between the service provider and the visitor. Main direct and indirect distribution

channels for tourism businesses are shown below and more information about distribution channels are given in module 2.

Direct Distribution Channels: In the context of tourism industries, direct distribution channels are toll free lines, phone, e-mail, business website (reservation form or application), business apps, personal sales and contract with company salespeople, owned sales offices.

Indirect Distribution Channels: Indirect distribution channels in the tourism industries include travel agents, tour operators, online travel agents (OTA), specialty channelers (incentive travel firms, meeting and convention planners, and corporate travel offices), travel meta search engines, and global distribution systems (GDS).

1.4.3.4.4 Promotion

Promotion refers to the forms of marketing communication that businesses make directly or indirectly with consumers. Main objectives of marketing communication with consumers are the following (Pride and Ferrell, 2018; Solomon et al., 2018):

- Giving information about products and businesses and raising awareness.
- Creating preference and persuading customers to buy.
- Getting consumers to try or test the product.
- Reducing demand fluctuations and stimulating demand.
- Identifying potential buyers.
- Keeping loyal customers.
- Supporting intermediaries' (distribution channels) marketing efforts.
- Reducing the impact of competitors' promotional efforts.
- Reminding businesses or product to the consumers.
- Creating a positive impression and long-term relationship.

There are five types of promotion or marketing communications that can be used by tourism and hospitality business: advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling, direct and digital marketing (Kotler and Armstrong, 2018). These communication types or methods used to promote a product or business are called promotion mix.

1-Advertising: It is 'any paid form of nonpersonal communication about an organization, product, service, or idea by an identified sponsor' (Belch and Belch, 2018, p.17).

2-Sales promotion: It refers to temporary incentives and their announcement for a certain period of time to increase the sales of a product. For example, a resort hotel may offer free accommodation for kids under 12 for certain period of time.

3-Public relations: It refers to the programmes and activities carried out to create a positive image among the public regarding the business and its products, and to eliminate negative impressions (Kotler and Keller, 2016).

4-Personal selling: It refers to the direct interaction and face-to-face meeting of the sales representative/staff of the business with potential consumers.

5-Direct and digital marketing: It is the marketing and communication activities carried out by communicating directly with consumers (Kotler and Armstrong, 2018)

1.4.3.4.5 People

People component of the marketing mix refers to the contact and support personnel that are involved in providing services to customers. Main output of tourism and hospitality businesses consists of services and services are intangible, and produced and consumed simultaneously in service providers premises (Kusluvan et al., 2010). These features make service providers critical for service quality, customer satisfaction and business performance in high contact service industries like tourism and hospitality. Because, intangibility of services is made tangible in the personality, appearance, attitudes, and behaviour of the service providers and they represent the product, image and brand of the business in the eyes of the consumer (Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault, 1990; Hartline and Jones 1996). Human resource management activities like recruiting, training, motivation, providing rewards, and creating teamwork, satisfaction, loyalty, and organisational culture are critical for satisfied employees who will lead to satisfied customers. For this reason, tourism and hospitality businesses should hire the right people (by being preferred employer, selecting the right people for the right job), enable employees (through empowerment, training, developing customer centric service delivery teams), motivate and energise employees (by providing fair pay and benefits, job motivation and satisfaction, recognition) (Wirtz &

Lovelock, 2018). People element of the marketing mix in the context of services may also refer to customers who are present in the service providers' premises. Customers need to be educated and their attitudes and behaviours should also be managed as they may affect the service quality and customer satisfaction in the service delivery process.

1.4.3.4.6 Physical Evidence

Physical evidence, also named physical atmosphere/environment or servicescape, is the exterior and interior of the service 'environment in which the service is delivered and where the firm and customer interact, and any tangible components that facilitate performance and communication of the service' (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2003, p.25). Physical atmosphere of a business provides tangible cues and has an influence on customer experience, service quality, and customer satisfaction, hence business performance. Servicescape has a role to send messages to, and get the attention of, target customers and affects their buying behaviour (Lovelock, and Wirtz, 2011). Physical evidence consists of ambient conditions (temperature, air quality, noise, music, odour etc.), space/function (layout, equipment, furnishings, etc.) and sign, symbols and artifacts (signage, personal artifacts, style of décor etc.) (Wirtz & Lovelock, C. 2018). For example, the exterior of the hotel building and its surroundings, car park, guest reception area, waiting areas, lobby, noise level, signature, guest rooms, equipment and materials in the hotel, furnishing, beds, uniforms and appearance of staff, food and drinks, crowd, smell and temperature are all elements of servicescape of a hotel business. All of these elements should be combined and integrated in a way to create positive visitor experience and satisfaction.

1.4.3.4.7 Process

Service delivery process is another element of extended marketing mix that has an effect on visitor experience, satisfaction, and loyalty and business performance. Service process refers to 'the actual procedures, mechanisms, and flow of activities by which the service is delivered' (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2003, p.25). Tourism and hospitality businesses should design and manage flow of service activities, service steps, level of service standardisation, level of employee involvement and discretion, policies, procedures, and level of customer involvement for the service experience

journey of visitors. Service delivery processes that are untimely, unfair, uncomfortable, and complex is likely to result in customer disappointment, dissatisfaction and desertion. In order to manage service processes, many service businesses design a service blueprint where the steps a customer goes through to get a service, actions of customers and service providers, service standards, and service support systems are shown visually in a flowchart.

1.5 Implementing Marketing Strategy

The next step in the marketing process is to implement marketing strategy in order to accomplish marketing goals and objectives. Marketing implementation is the 'process that turns marketing plans into action assignments and ensures that these assignments are executed' successfully (Lamb, Hair and McDaniel, 2000, p.45). Implementation addresses the who, where, what and how of marketing activities (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012). As jobber put it (2001, p.645) 'marketing strategy concerns the issues of *what* should happen, and *why* it should happen. Implementation focuses on actions: *who* is responsible for various activities, *how* the strategy should be carried out, *where* things will happen, and *when* action will take place'. It must be born in mind that not only marketing people but everyone in the organisation that creates value for customers and stakeholders are involved in the implementation process of marketing strategy. Implementation activities require detailed organisation (job descriptions and assignment), coordination, motivation, direction, communication and budget.

1.6 Evaluation and Control

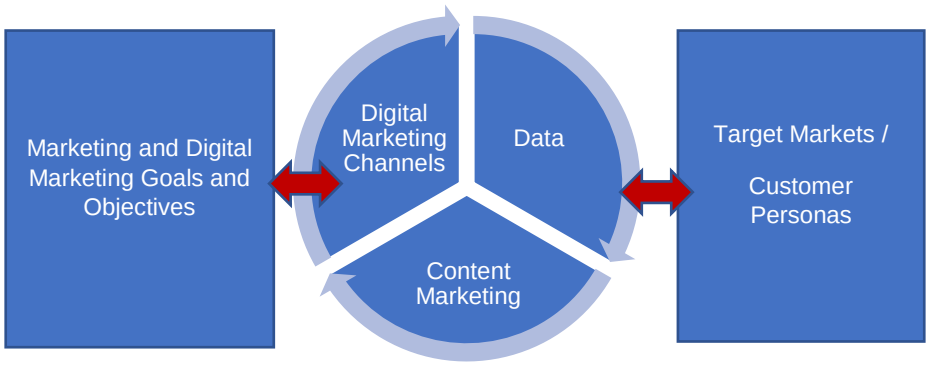
Finally, evaluation and control are a critical part of the marketing process both during and after the implementation process. Evaluation and control are done to check whether marketing goals and objectives are achieved effectively and strategies are implemented successfully within the given timeframe. Evaluation and control programmes, procedures and criteria should be in place to check the efficiency and effectiveness of marketing efforts. At the end of evaluation and control, corrective actions can be taken if marketing goals and objectives are not reached. Operating control checks whether marketing objectives are reached whereas strategic control determine whether marketing strategies are well matched with marketing opportunities

(Kotler and Armstrong, 2012). Businesses may fail to achieve their marketing objectives because of unrealistic marketing objectives, inappropriate marketing strategies, poor implementation or major changes in the marketing environment (Lamb, Hair and McDaniel, 2018).

1.7 Digital Marketing Strategy

Digital marketing is used synonymously with internet marketing, online marketing, e-marketing, web marketing and electronic marketing. Digital marketing is about creating value through internet and digital media to meet customers' needs and wants or solve their problems. Digital marketing is defined as 'a process in which organisations and existing or potential customers use the internet to create value and products as well as exchange them' (Visser, Sikkenga and Berry, 2021, p.14). It is the

Figure 7: Components of Digital Marketing Strategy



Source: Adapted from Heinze, Fletcher, Rashid and Cruz, 2017.

management and execution of marketing activities and 'achieving marketing objectives through applying digital media, data and technology' (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2019, p.9). Digital marketing has many advantages for tourism and hospitality businesses including a broad geographic reach, cost efficiency, quantifiable and measurable results, easier personalization, the opportunity to focus on only the prospects most likely to purchase your product or service, more connection and engagement with customers at every stage, easy and convenient conversions, ease of adaptation and change in digital marketing strategy. Digital marketing strategy is about the tools and methods used to reach marketing goals and objectives using internet and other digital media. There are three main components of digital marketing

strategy which are briefly described below (Figure 7) (Heinze, Fletcher, Rashid and Cruz, 2017).

Data: It is usually the case that two types of data is collected for digital marketing strategy. The first is about online customers and marketplace including location and demographics of customers, customer reviews, online buying behaviour and macro and micro marketing environment. The second type of data collected is about digital marketing metrics or key performance indicators in relation to a company's digital marketing activities.

Content Marketing: Content marketing refers to 'creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent digital content to attract and acquire a clearly defined audience and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action' (Content marketing Institute, 2022).

Digital Marketing Channels: These represent channels through which an organization represent itself online and carry out marketing activities. They include website marketing, e-mail marketing, social media marketing, digital advertising, search engine marketing and optimization, mobile marketing, and other digital distribution channels such as online travel agencies and global distribution systems (Heinze, Fletcher, Rashid and Cruz, 2017).

These three components of marketing strategy should be aligned with each other. Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) provide a simple and useful framework for businesses to structure their digital marketing strategies. The framework is called RACE (Figure 8) and it consists of four steps; reach, act, convert and engage which are explained below (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

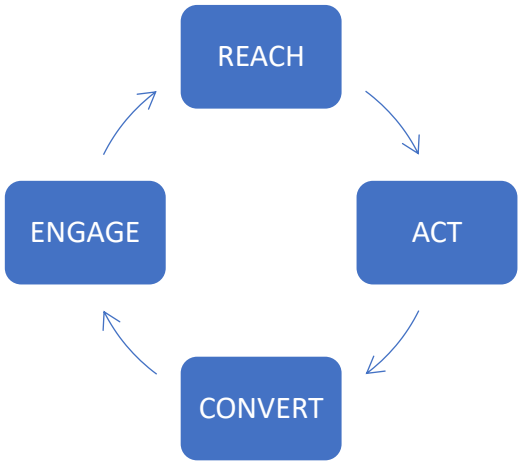
STEP 1-REACH: Reach means creating awareness on online and offline media and drive customers to web presences (web page, social media, or other online platforms).

STEP 2-ACT (INTERACT): Act implies engaging customers with the business and brand on its website or online presence.

STEP 3-CONVERT: Convert means generating leads, sales and fans on web presence and offline.

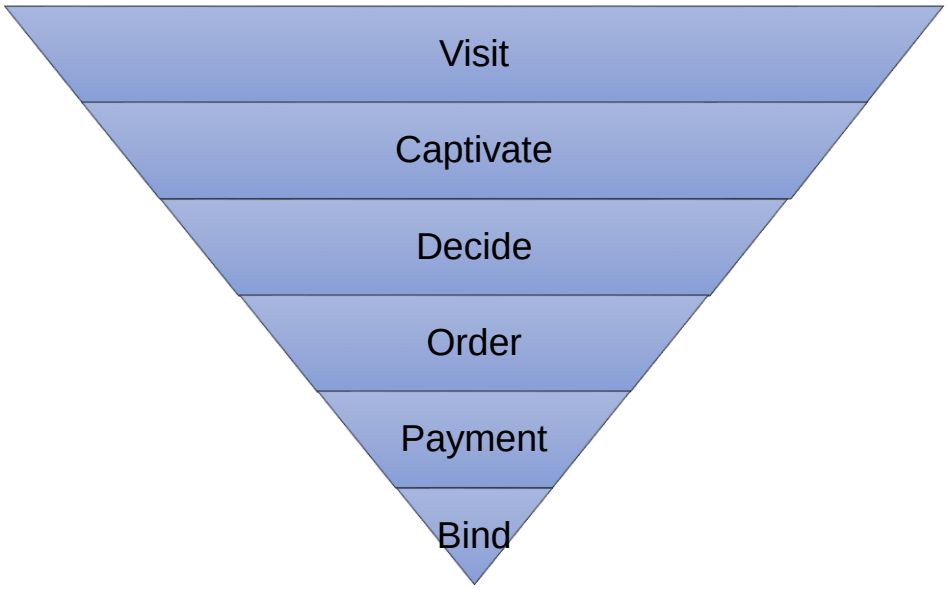
STEP 4-ENGAGE: Engage means building customer relationships through time to achieve customer loyalty.

Figure 8: Race Framework for Digital Marketing Strategy



Source: Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2019, p.27.

Figure 9: Digital Marketing Funnel



Source: Visser, Sikkenga and Berry, 2021, p.22.

Another model that can be used for implementing marketing strategy is digital marketing funnel (Figure 9). Visser, Sikkenga and Berry (2021, p.22) succinctly explains the digital marketing funnel model as follows: 'The first point of attention for a digital marketer is generating visits to the digital sales channel, in this case the ecommerce website (visit). Here, the objective is to ensure that visitors are so

interested in what they find, that they want to find out more about what is on offer (captivate). The next step is ensuring that the visitors compare and evaluate products in order to come to the decision of what to buy (decide). Then the visitor orders the chosen product (order) and completes the payment procedure (payment), leading to the realisation of actual sales. The last objective is to bind the buyer to the ecommerce website in order to encourage repeat purchases (bind)'. These steps can effectively be used to design and implement digital marketing strategy and activities.

1.8 Conclusion

This module has explained the marketing and related concepts, main steps and principles in the marketing process and main elements of marketing strategy. Marketing in the context of tourism and hospitality is about creating consumer values or benefits for the visitors and stakeholders involved in the process. Marketing process includes the following steps: analysis of marketing environment, determining marketing objectives, designing marketing strategy, implementing marketing strategy, and evaluation and control. Digital marketing is marketing activities carried out on the internet and other digital media. Three components of digital marketing strategy are data, digital marketing channels and content marketing.

Supplementary Resources

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1bggXv3QGys&list=PLxhOvQRVBnt1yB9dqxIanXmjTTcOCgTFA

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bixR-KIJKYM

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h95cQkEWBx0

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Assessment Questions

1) Which of the following terms is equivalent to "marketing"?

a) Selling b) Manipulation c) Communication d) Advertising **e) None**

2) Which of the following is not a component of the tourism system?

a) Visitor generating region b) Destination region c) Visitor **d) Price** e) Tourism industries

3) …….. refers to meeting or exceeding a customer's expectations with respect to a product.

a) **Customer satisfaction** b) Customer equity, d) Customer values d) Customer lifetime value e) Customer loyalty

4) Marketing tools that destinations and tourism businesses use to meet and satisfy visitors' needs, wants, expectations and solve their problems are called …… ……

a) Marketing mix b) Market orientation c) Market segmentation d) Market targeting e) Positioning

5) Three components of digital marketing strategy are data, marketing channels and product.

a) True

b) False

6) Market segmentation in the context of tourism is the process of dividing heterogenous visitors into similar and homogenous groups in terms of needs, wants, demographics, buying behaviour etc.

a) True

b) False

7) What is the right order of the following steps in the marketing process?

1) Designing marketing strategy
2) Implementing marketing strategy
3) Analysing the situation or marketing environment
4) Determining marketing goals and objectives
5) Evaluation and control

a) 1,2,3,4,5 **b) 3,4,1,2,5** c) 5,4, 2,1,3 d) 3,2,1,4,5 e) 1,5,4,3,2

8) What is the right order of the RACE framework for structuring digital marketing strategies and activities?

a) convert, engage, act and reach b) engage, convert, reach and act **c) reach, act, convert and engage** d) act, reach, engage, convert e) None

9) Please match the concepts on the left with the correct definitions on the right.

1-Customer lifetime value	a) Any paid form of nonpersonal communication about an organization, product, service, or idea by an identified sponsor
2-Advertising	b) A set of interdependent organizations involved in the process of making a product or service available for use or consumption by the consumer of business user
3-Marketing	c) The value of the entire stream of purchases a customer makes over a lifetime of patronage
4-Distribution channel	d) The management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably'

a) 1c, 2a, 3d, 4b b)1a, 2d, 3b, 4c b) 1b, 2c, 3d, 4a c) 1a, 2b, 3c, 4d

d) 1c, 2b, 3c, 4d e) 1d, 2c, 3a, 4b

10) Please match the terms of the RACE framework on the left with the correct definitions on the right.

1- Reach	a) Engaging customers with the business and brand on its website or online presence
2- Act (Interact)	b) Building customer relationships through time to achieve customer loyalty.
3- Convert	c) Generating leads, sales and fans on web presence and offline.
4- Engage	d) Creating awareness on online and offline media and drive customers to web presences

a) 1b, 2c, 3a, 4d b) 1c, 2a, 3d, 4b c) 1a, 2d, 3c, 4b d) 1b, 2c, 3a, 4d

e) 1d, 2a, 3c, 4b

2: Online Travel Buying Behaviour and Digital Distribution Channels for Small and Medium Sized Tourism Enterprises

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Learning Objectives

After reading this unit, the reader will be able to:

- know the meaning of travel buying behaviour;
- understand visitors' buying process or journey and the role of marketing during the process;
- explain the distribution channels and the critical role of digital distribution channels for tourism and hospitality businesses;
- list and describe direct and indirect online distribution channels for service providers in tourism and hospitality industries;
- tell the factors to consider when selecting online distribution channels for service provider in tourism and hospitality industries.

2.0 Introduction

Development of information and communication technologies (ICT), particularly internet and mobile technologies, have changed many aspects of modern life including how people get education, interact, work and shop. It has also changed how tourists make travel plans and decisions, search for travel information, and purchase tourism products. ICT and internet have fundamentally altered the business models and distribution channels in tourism. Tourism and hospitality enterprises have also changed their business model in the face of changing travel behaviour and technology (Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019; Yuan et al., 2019). Many travellers started to use service providers' websites, applications or the online travel services rather than brick-and-mortar travel agencies or tour operators to book their trips. Online travel booking through mobile/tablet and desktop is the most favoured booking vehicle (Businesswire, 2022). According to STRATOS, 82% of all travel bookings around the world took place without human interaction in 2018 and for the first time, more than half of all European travel bookings were made online in 2019 (Businesswire, 2022). Led by Europe's two largest

markets (the U.K. and Germany), online bookings are projected to continue to climb. By 2021, Europe will surpass the U.S. to have the highest online penetration of any other region (Phocuswright Research, 2020). Although some people are distracted by the perceived risk and lack of trust associated with online purchase, it is projected that worldwide online travel industry will grow with a compound annual growth rate of 10,58% from 2021 to 2027 (Businesswire, 2022). Online bookings continue to increase as more and more consumers purchase tourism and travel related products online.

This module explains the online travel buying process, and factors influencing online buying behaviour of visitors. More specifically, it looks at how prospective visitors search for information, evaluate tourism and travel services, make purchase decisions, and share their experiences with others online, and the factors affecting the online travel buying process and decision making. The module also examines direct and indirect online distribution channels that service providers can use to make their tourism services available for the use and consumption of potential visitors.

2.1 Consumer Buying Behaviour in Tourism

Consumer behaviour generally refers to human behaviour in the context of consumption. More specifically, consumer behaviour refers to the 'processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and desires' (Solomon, 2020, p.583). Accordingly, online consumer behaviour in tourism is concerned with the following questions:

- How do visitors become aware of travel and tourism products that may satisfy their needs and wants?
- How are visitors triggered to buy travel and tourism products online?
- How do visitors search for, evaluate and purchase tourism and travel products?
- What are the buying stages decision making styles of visitors online?
- What are the visitors' post consumption behaviours such as satisfaction or dissatisfaction, loyalty or desertion, and positive or negative publicity?
- What factors influence online buying behaviour of travellers/visitors?

This section of the module specifically focuses on the online buying process of travellers and the factors that influence this process.

2.2 Online Consumer Buying Process in Tourism

As more and more people buy travel and tourism products online and digital environments present many opportunities for reaching tourists and marketing travel and tourism products, it is important to understand and respond to online visitor journeys and behaviours. The classical consumer buying process as a rational and linear process involves the following hierarchical steps (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016):

1) Problem Recognition: Customers became aware that they have a need, want, or problem that can be satisfied through a purchase.

2) Information Search: Customers seek information regarding a product (goods or service) that can meet a need, want in the best possible way given the buying criteria and customer values.

3) Evaluation of Alternatives: Customers compare alternative products in terms of buying/selection criteria.

4) Purchase: This is the stage where customer buy, and use or consume products.

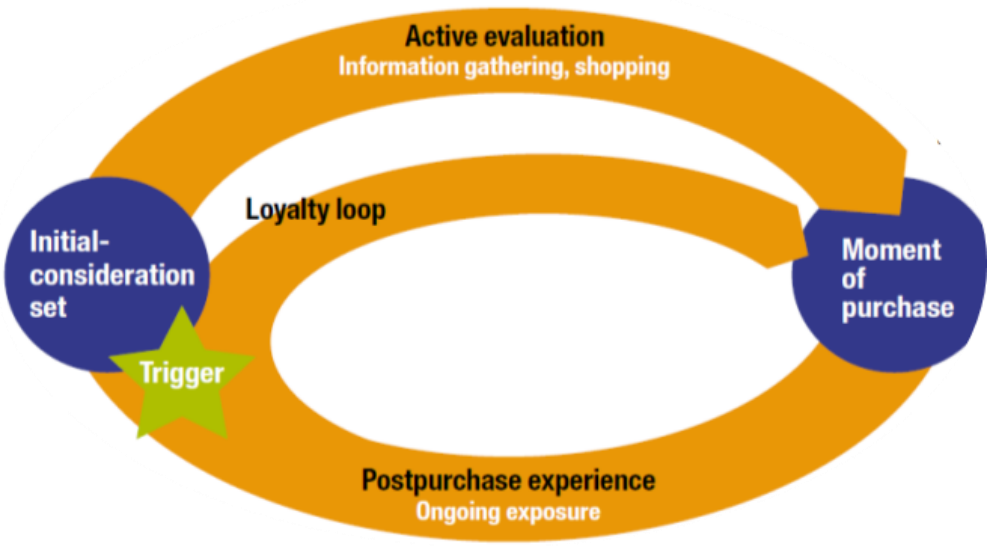
5) Post-purchase Behaviour: Customers make an evaluation regarding the purchased product which is reflected in complaints, satisfaction, dissatisfaction, loyalty and good or bad publicity.

However, with the development of digital communication channels on the internet, the proliferation of media, increasing power of electronic word of mouth and online influences, consumer decision-making process has become a more circular journey involving trigger, initial consideration; active evaluation; moment of purchase; post purchase experience and loyalty loop (Figure 1) (Court et al., 2009). These stages are called consumer decision journey or consumer/customer journey which is explained below.

1-Triggers: A trigger is a stimulus that starts the consumer buying / decision journey. This stage is also named as the awareness stage. Triggers are the stimulus that generates interest and awareness in a product or service (Court et al., 2009). Consumers may be triggered to buy products by way of their needs, wants, problems, advertisements in on TV, print and digital platforms, word-of-mouth communications,

exposures to goods and services, and comments and suggestions from friends and relatives. There should be triggers for buying travel and tourism products. A trigger in

Figure 1: Consumer Decision Journey



Source: Court et al., 2009.

the context of travel and tourism reminds individuals that they have a problem that can be resolved with travel and tourism products, holidaying or visiting a destination. These triggers may be internal like physical and psychological exhaustion and missing loved ones or external like a must do business trip, neighbours returning from a holiday suntanned, an outdoor or digital display advertisement, and picture of a friend on holiday in the social media. Below are some online and offline triggers for travel and tourism products:

- Outdoor advertisements.
- Mass media advertisements (TV, Radio, Newspaper).
- Digital advertisements including banner or display advertisements search engine advertisements, remarketing.
- E-mails to previous customers.
- Websites and business applications.
- Social media postings and advertisements.
- Posters in public places and local travel agents.

- Travel influencers' social media postings or blogs.
- Destination / brand blogs.
- Holidaying programs on TVs, trade fairs, free travel magazines, brochures.

There are two critical roles of travel and tourism marketers at this stage. The first is to use promotional text, audio and video messages and advertisement that trigger demand for travel and tourism products in the target market. The second is to create awareness about peoples' needs and problems and how your tourism related brand, a holiday or your destination can satisfy them.

2-Initial Consideration Set: Initial consideration set includes goods and services that consumers have preferences, some sort of impressions and preconceived ideas (Bosomworth, 2015). Once a desire for travel and tourism product or holiday is identified, the next step is the initial consideration of a set of travel and tourism products including destinations, flights, accommodations, or package tours. Initial consideration of travel and tourism products are usually based on previous experiences with, or impressions of, the products stored in memory. These preferences, impressions and ideas may be based on previous use of, and satisfied experiences with, travel and tourism products; word of mouth, or e-word of mouth, online customer reviews, online or offline advertisements, online and offline visibility, and conversations with friends etc. If the travel and tourism product is a familiar and frequently purchased product, people may act and purchase without seeking further information. In order to be in the consideration set of travellers, tourism and hospitality businesses should do the following:

- Satisfy current customers.
- Make above the line advertising online and offline.
- Create high brand awareness and visibility online and offline.
- Foster positive word of mouth online and offline.
- Keep contact with travellers after consumption through database marketing, e-mails or social media.

3-Active Evaluation: Active evaluation is the stage where consumers gather information about alternative products, compare and evaluate them in the light of their needs, wants, problems or expectations (Court et al., 2009). But it is usually the case that most people travel to different places every time they travel and they actively

engage in information gathering about destinations, accommodations, flights etc. Potential visitors may seek additional information from external sources such as internet, personal sources (family, friends), providers of specific tourism and travel products (airlines, hotels, tour operators, travel agents), and public sources (media, social media, destination management organisations. Business websites, product review sites, consumer review sites, news reports, and conversations with family and friends and internet can be used as sources of information (Bosomworth, 2015; Court et al., 2009). At this stage, consumers eliminate products that do not meet their buying criteria or products that do not have requested product features and benefits. Active evaluation stage is also called zero moment of truth (ZMOT) by Google. The ZMOT is the time when the consumer researches a product, mostly online, prior to purchase and sellers' knowledge (Lecinski, 2014).

There are two activities potential visitors do during active evaluation: 1) Gather information about alternative travel and tourism products and compare, and 2) Evaluate them in terms of selection or evaluation criteria in the light of their needs, wants, problems or expectations. At this stage, travel and tourism marketers should learn information sources of their target market and provide timely, accurate and relevant information about their products. Table 1 shows the most important online sources used by leisure and business travellers (Google Travel Study, 2014). As can be seen from Table 1, search engines, service provider websites and applications, and online travel agencies are the most used online information sources for travel and booking information.

Potential visitors spend enough time to gather information about travel and tourism products in order to reduce risks and uncertainties regarding travel and tourism products. These risks and uncertainties may be related to product performance/functional risks, financial risks, social risks, physical/health risks, psychological risks and time loss risks (Forsythe and Shi, 2003). There are high risk and uncertainties involved in travel and tourism due to the following: 1) travel and tourism products are bought sight unseen; 2) There is physical and cultural distance

Table 1: Online Information Sources Used in Travel Planning

ONLINE INFORMATION SOURCES FOR LEISURE TRAVELLERS	(%)	ONLINE INFORMATION SOURCES FOR BUSINESS TRAVELLERS	(%)
Search engines	60	Hotel sites/apps	60
Hotel sites/apps	48	Search engines	55
Online travel agency	40	Airline sites/apps	53
Airline sites/apps	39	Online travel agency	45
Map sites/apps	38	Map sites/apps	45
Travel review sites/apps	36	Car rental sites/app	44
Travel search sites/apps	33	Travel review sites/apps	42
Destination specific sites/apps	30	Travel search sites/apps	38
Social networking sites/apps	26	Destination specific sites/apps	30
Car rental sites/app	22	Travel planning sites/apps	29

Source: Google Travel Study, June 2014, Ipsos MediaCT.

between guests and hosts in tourism; 3) Most tourism and travel product are intangible services; 4) The financial cost of travel and tourism products is high and visitors cannot return them if they are not satisfied with the experience. In order to reduce risks and uncertainties, travel and tourism marketers should give tangible cues about the intangible services. These cues may be:

- Pictures, videos, live broadcasts about your organisation, facilities and location on digital channels.
- Online virtual tour of your organization and facilities.
- Quality of your website.
- Website security certificate.
- Strong brand image.
- Representation in Google Business Profile and trade and business directories.
- Visibility in travel search engines and online travel agencies (OTAs).
- Visibility and representation in brick and mortar travel agents and tour operators.
- Customer reviews and scores (Website, OTAs, Meta Travel Search Engines, Review sites).
- Price.

- Your organizations' membership to professional organizations.
- References of famous people and influencers.
- Quality certificates / Rewards.

Another role of marketers at this stage is to help target markets evaluate the services of the business. In order to do that, marketers should learn target markets' selection or evaluation criteria, feature these criteria in marketing communications and repeat them in their communications with potential visitors. Selection or evaluation criteria are the most important attributes of the marketing mix that consumers value when making a purchase. Location, price, brand image, quality, availability, variety of facilities and services are some of the most important attributes visitors use when buying travel and tourism related products.

4-Moment of Purchase: This is the stage where consumers decide to purchase a product perceived as the most acceptable option in the given situation. This stage is coined as first moment of truth (FMOT) by Procter and Gamble where consumers prefer a product or brand over competition and purchase (Garret, 2020). The role of marketing people at this stage is to learn obstacles to buy (through chatbots, e-mail, text messaging, Google Analytics, telephone etc.) and remove these obstacles. These obstacles may be related to availability, payment, booking, services required etc.

5-Postpurchase Experience: Post purchase experience refers to actual use or consumption of products, post-purchase service requests (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016) and customers' future attitudes and behaviours regarding the product like loyalty/disloyalty, positive/negative publicity and word of mouth about the product, and suggestion/disapproval of the product. Post purchase experience is also called second moment of truth (SMOT) (Bosomworth, 2015) and not only does this stage provide the experience to inform the next decision making journey for the consumer but it also provides the ease and means to share these experiences (so called brand foot print) for future consumers to follow (Bosomworth, 2015; Court et al. 2009). Marketers should engage in the following marketing activities at this stage:

- Reducing cognitive dissonance (conflicting thoughts and emotions about consumer's purchase) through cancellation and refund policies, post-purchase service quality, price and quality guarantees, flexible booking policies, supportive and confirmatory messages, advertisement and e-mails.

- Providing services as promised and expected.
- Measuring satisfaction and dissatisfaction and complaints during and after service delivery.
- Managing customer reviews online.

6-Loyalty Loop: Loyalty loop refers to the automatic buying behaviour of satisfied consumers when the same need, want, or problem is triggered again. Consumers repurchase the same good service or brand based on previous positive experience, trust and close relationship (Bosomworth, 2015). If consumers are satisfied, they become loyal customers and brand advocates. Customer satisfaction and loyalty is critical for customer lifetime value and customer equity. Satisfied customers become loyal and repeat guest, buy other products from the company, spread positive Word of Mouth online and offline, suggest new product ideas to the company, and they do not sue companies. Unsatisfied customers may never buy again, sue companies and demand compensation, and spread negative word of mouth online and offline.

2.3 Factors Affecting Travel Buying Behaviour Online

There are many factors that affect online buying of travel and tourism products. Main factors are briefly reviewed below.

Consumer Characteristics: Demographic profile of prospective visitors is one of the consumer characteristics that can have an influence on purchase of travel and tourism products online. Demographic variables are the attributes of people that can be measured and studied objectively. These attributes may be related age, sex, education level, race, income level, area of residence etc. Empirical studies on the impact of demographic variables on online purchase of travel products yielded conflicting results. One research on the subject has shown that gender and race did not influence online buying of travel and tourism related products (Weber and Roehl, 1999). But other studies claimed that women buy more online travel related products than men while others found support for the opposite (Sanchez et al., 2022). Similarly, some studies have found that senior individuals with higher levels of education, and income are more likely to purchase travel and tourism related products online (Amaro & Duarte, 2013). Yet, other studies indicated that younger consumers were more likely to purchase online, and education and income did not affect the use of online platforms to buy travel

and tourism products (Amaro & Duarte, 2013). Although there are conflicting studies, the following consumer characteristics are positively related to buying travel and tourism related products online (Amaro & Duarte, 2013):

- Knowledge and frequency of use of internet/computer.
- Prior online shopping experience.
- Having a positive attitude toward the Internet and online shopping.
- Higher levels of travel frequency and experience.
- Searching for travel information online.
- Traveling for business purposes.
- Personal characteristics such as innovativeness, opinion leadership and involvement with online purchasing.

Perceived Risk: Perceived risk refers to 'the potential loss perceived by a consumer in considering the purchase of travel online when compared to the purchase of travel offline' (Amaro & Duarte, 2015, p.67). Some people perceive online buying and transactions as risky and perceived risk is negatively related to consumers' intentions to purchase travel and tourism related products online (Amaro & Duarte, 2016). Apparently, perceived risks reduce trust on online channels. As explained above, there are a number of factors that increase risks involved in international travel and tourism. This means that tourism and hospitality businesses should strive for reducing perceived risks of online buying. Cooperating with partners who already have a good reputation and strong brand like OTAs; developing strong brand image and a good reputation (Grabner-Kraeuter, 2002); getting positive customer reviews and comments online; giving tangible cues about intangible services; developing their own apps, evidencing proof of the security of the online platform, communicating directly and constantly with customers, and addressing privacy issues can help reduce perceived risks for travellers.

Trust: Trust in the context of online travel shopping is the expectation of online prospective travel buyers that they will not be mislead, manipulated or exploited by online service provider (Corritore et al., 2003). Trust on websites and digital channels also influences attitudes to online shopping. Some costumers do not regard internet as a safe and reliable transaction channel for shopping (Bourlakis, Papagiannidis, & Fox, 2008). Trust seems to influence intention to buy travel and tourism products

through its effect on perceived risk and general attitudes to online shopping (Amaro & Duarte, 2016). In order to increase trust in online platforms, tourism and hospitality service providers can offer service guarantees, and warranty of refund; provide up-to-date and accurate information, improve perceived e-customer values, emphasise security of the platform and privacy of the personal information, and keep the line of communication open with customers (Amaro & Duarte, 2016; Fam, Foscht, and Collins, 2004).

Privacy and Security Concerns: Many prospective travellers are unwilling to use digital channels due to information-privacy and payment-security concerns (Chen et al., 2013). Studies have confirmed that people who have privacy and security concerns regarding online shopping are reluctant to buy travel and tourism products online (Agag and El-Masry, 2016; Ponte et al., 2015). The measures explained above to build trust and reduce risks can also be used to address privacy and security concerns for online platforms.

Perceived Customer Values: Customer values in the context of digital platforms are the benefits consumers get from buying a particular product online relative to the sacrifices made. Online platforms of tourism and hospitality providers provide many benefits or so called customer e-values including lack of cognitive effort involved, control or utilitarian value, value for money, and emotional value (fun and enjoyment using a travel website) (Mohd-Any et al., 2014). Online travel and tourism related platforms can provide functional, emotional, social and monetary values (Chang et al., 2019). Some researchers conceptualised customer e-values as monetary, quality-of-benefits, social status, information, and preference values and these values are positively related to purchase intention on travel websites (Talwar, et al., 2020). Still, some other researchers noted that perceived relative advantages of online platforms, namely convenience, timesaving, financial benefits, product variety and enjoyment, influence intentions to purchase travel products online indirectly through trust and attitude to online shopping (Amaro and Duarte, 2015).

Online Consumer Reviews and Ranking: Online customer evaluation on service providers' website, travel review sites and other digital platforms like social media and travel meta search engines is another factor that can have a profound effect on consumers' buying decisions and online purchasing of travel and tourism products.

Research has shown that online positive customer evaluations of tourism and hospitality service providers with numerical rating increases both booking intentions and consumer trust (Spark and Browning, 2011). Another stream of research has indicated that positive electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) increased purchase intention and negative reviews influenced all aspects of online purchase negatively (Cantallops and Salvi, 2014).

Website Quality: Website quality, also named e-service quality, e-servicescape or website atmospherics, plays an important role in the purchase of travel and tourism products online. Website quality refers to 'the degree to which an electronic service is able to effectively and efficiently fulfil relevant customer needs' (Fassnacht and Koese, 2006, p.25). Another widely accepted definition defines e-service or website quality as 'the extent to which a web site facilitates efficient and effective shopping, purchasing, and delivery' (Parasuraman et al., 2015, p.217). Different dimensions are used to measure website quality. For example, Hasan & Abuelrub (2011) identified four dimensions of website quality including the quality of the content, the design of the website, the structure of the website and a website's usability. User-friendliness, trust in the website and the appearance of the website are used to measure the quality of website user experience (Sauro, 2015). According to Fassnacht and Koese (2006) three dimensions of e-service quality are: environment quality (graphic quality and clarity of layout); delivery quality (attractiveness of selection, information quality, ease of use, technical quality), and outcome quality (reliability, functional benefit, emotional benefit). Parasuraman et al. (2005) identified efficiency, system availability, fulfilment, privacy and e-service recovery as the parameters of website quality. In the context of travel and tourism businesses, functionality, usability, security, and privacy are used to measure website quality (Ali, 2016). Research in the tourism and hospitality context has shown that website quality increases a positive attitude toward and trust in a website, which leads to increased intentions to buy tourism and travel-related products from the website (Law, 2019).

Perceived Behavioural Control: Perceived behavioural control refers to the extent to which an individual believes he/she has the sufficient capacity and resources to perform a particular behaviour (Brookes, 2021). If prospective travellers perceive that they have the capabilities and resources to purchase travel and tourism related products online, then they are likely to buy them online (Amaro & Duarte, 2016).

Complicated websites, limited payment options, technical problems encountered on the website, inaccessibility of service provider online, and unaviability of the websites in consumers' languages may be some of the factors that reduce the perceived behavioural control of prospective travellers (Amaro & Duarte, 2016).

Satisfaction with Previous Online Purchasing: Consumer satisfaction with an online service provider's website, known as e-customer satisfaction, may result in repurchase intentions and loyalty (Curras-Perez, et al., 2017).

2.4 Digital Distribution Channels for Tourism and Hospitality Businesses

Distribution refers to the process of making products available to consumers for use and consumption (Kotler and Armstrong, 2018). Distribution channels are organisations that perform all the functions required to link producers with end customers' (American Marketing Association, 2022). Distribution in the context of travel and tourism refers to bringing visitors together with destinations and tourism businesses. Distribution channels in tourism provides 'the link between producers of tourism services and their customers' (Gartner and Bachri, 1994, p.164). The distribution channels in tourism consist of organizations that bring together visitors, tourism businesses and destinations. Distribution channels provide competitive advantage (Buhalis, 2001), financial performance (Abdullah et al., 2021) and growth (Pearce & Tan, 2004) for tourism and hospitality businesses. Distribution function for tourism service providers is a bit different from manufacturers of physical goods. Manufacturers of physical goods produce products in the factory and transport and push them towards end consumers directly or through wholesalers or retailers. But tourism and hospitality services are produced and consumed simultaneously at service providers' premises and destinations, and the role of distribution in tourism is to move and pull travellers or visitors towards destinations and service providers' premises. Distribution channels in tourism attract and direct the consumer towards the destination and tourism businesses. Furthermore, tourism services are perishable and cannot be stored. If they are not consumed or used when they are ready, there may be huge amount of economic loss due to unused and idle service capacity. This necessitates an effective and efficient distribution system. Main function of distribution channels in the context of tourism and hospitality are as follows (Buhalis, 2001; Hudson and Hudson, 2017, Middleton and Clarke, 2001):

- Information provision and travel advice.
- Designing travel plans.
- Reservation and ticketing.
- Promotion of destinations and tourism businesses.
- Acting as distribution and sales network for tourism businesses.
- Bringing together individual tourism products and creating a package tour.
- Capacity utilization guarantee and risk taking on behalf of the service providers.
- Organising travel services and package tours at low prices for visitors.
- Providing service quality and satisfaction assurance.
- Provision of other services (visa, transfer, foreign exchange, etc.).

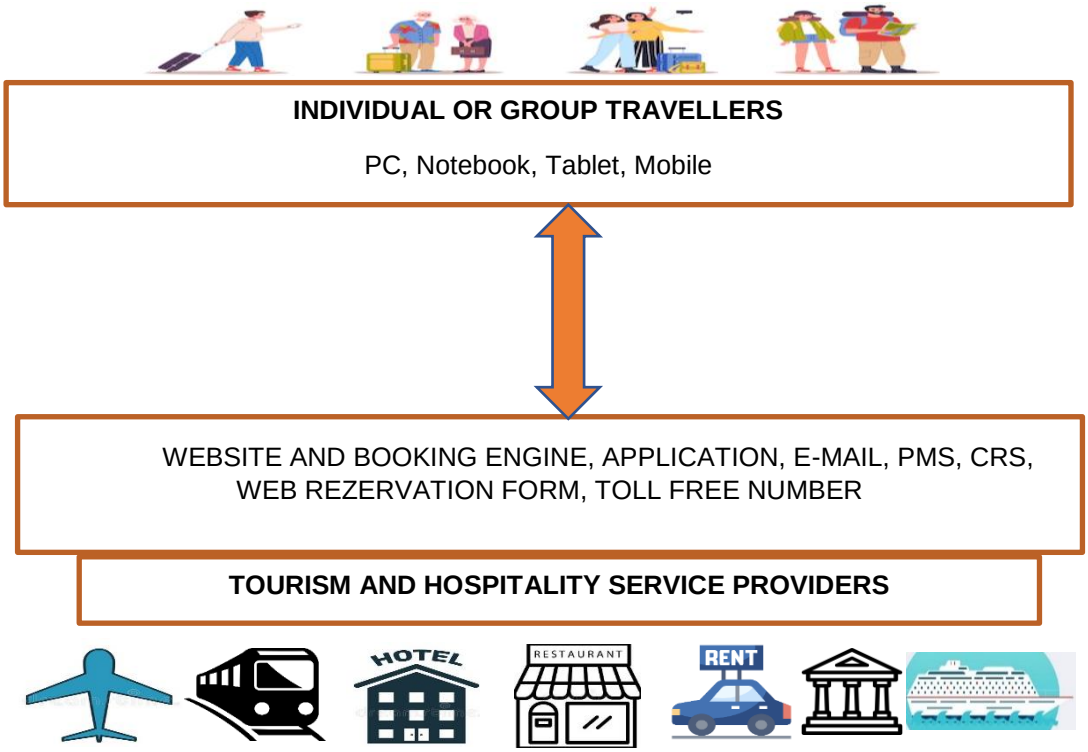
Since tourism products are intangible and there is often physical and cultural distance between producers of travel and tourism services and visitors, and tourism products are bought 'sight unseen'; travel purchase decisions are based on available written, visual and virtual information. Information is the lifeblood of the tourism and hospitality industries. So, internet and digital channels is the perfect tool for travellers to organise their travel and holiday in an efficient and effective way by collecting travel information and purchasing travel and tourism products. Main benefits of using online channels for travellers are the following (Agag & El-Masry, 2016; Casaló et al., 2010; Ryu, Choi and Cho, 2021):

- Lower cost of searching, planning and purchasing travel and tourism products.
- Easy comparison of different destinations, service providers, products and prices.
- Customisation of tourism products in line with traveller's expectations and needs.
- 7/24 accessibility.
- Provision of visual and virtual image of intangible travel and tourism products before actual purchase.
- The comfort of booking from home and saving of time and effort.
- Variety of package deals and price-saving options online.

2.4.1 Online Direct Distribution

In this type of online distribution (Figure 2), the tourism business directs the visitors to its own business and products without the help of any online independent intermediaries. The service provider is responsible for the distribution of its own product. There is no intermediary between the company producing the service and the potential visitor. Potential visitors purchase directly online from the business providing the service. Businesses provide information directly to consumers, making it easier for consumers to get information, make reservations and purchases and organize their travel. Service provider is responsible for promoting, distributing and selling. No middlemen are involved. Extensive digital marketing skills are required (quality website, business app, digital ads, social media, blogs etc.) for online direct distribution. Tourism and hospitality businesses use website and booking engine, business app, e-mail, computer reservation systems (CRS), property management systems (PMS), web reservation form, and toll-free numbers to communicate with

Figure 2: Online Direct Distribution



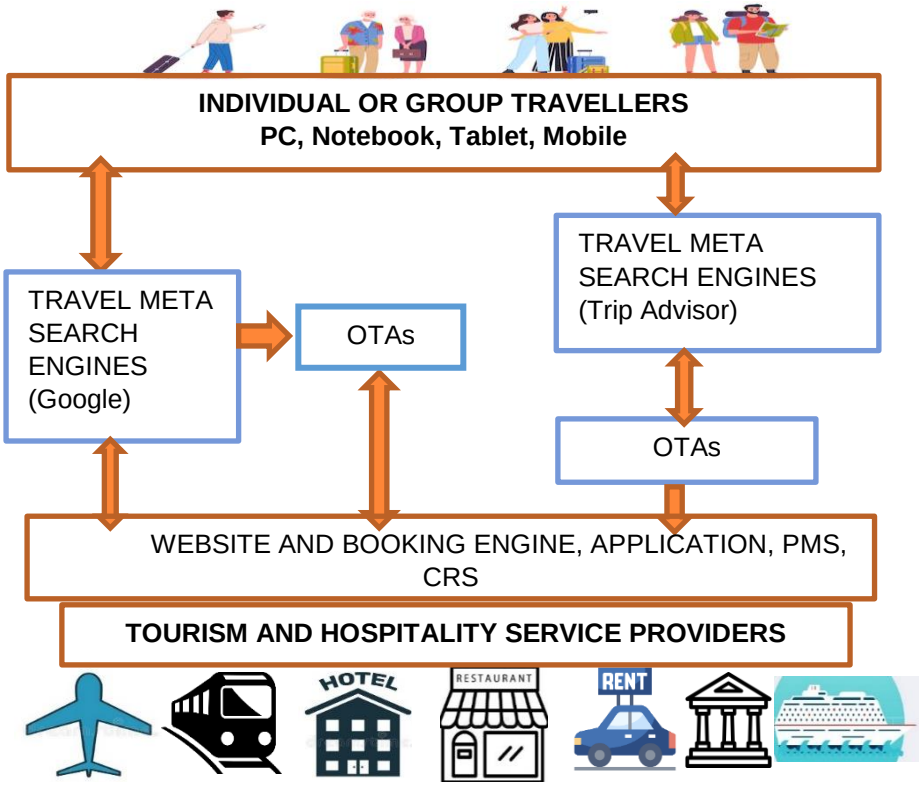
potential visitors and get bookings. There are many advantages of online direct distribution for service providers such as:

- No commission is paid to middlemen.
- More consumer data is collected and service provider has a better chance to develop customer relations and loyalty programs.
- More control on service quality and customer satisfaction.
- No dependence on intermediaries.
- Service provider has a chance to develop brand image in the market.

There are also some drawbacks of online direct distribution:

- Dedicated website and booking management are required.
- Website may be lost among thousands of websites.
- Marketing power of OTAs and global distribution systems (GDSs) is not used.
- Visibility and access are limited across the world.
- More marketing expenditure and expertise are required (quality website, digital ads, contents, etc.).

Figure 3: Online Indirect Distribution through Travel Meta Search Engines



2.4.2 Online Indirect Distribution through Travel Meta Search Engines

Travel meta search engines are search engines for finding, listing and ranking travel and tourism service providers' websites by way of keyword search. They are not platforms for making reservations. If service providers bid (pay) for ranking high in the search results lists, they have a better chance of ranking high in the search results page. When travellers search for relevant travel and tourism related products, relevant service providers are listed in search results page. Some meta travel search engines like Google Travel, direct travellers to the web page of businesses that provide tourism services, as well as to an online travel agency (Figure 3). On the other hand, some meta travel search engines like TripAdvisor direct travellers directly to online travel agencies (Figure 3). In such cases, service providers should have connectivity with online travel agencies to appear in the first ranks in meta travel search engines result pages. Meta search engines work on pay per action basis (pay per click or pay per acquisition) for the sponsored websites. If service providers become a sponsor for the meta travel search engines, then they have a higher chance of being listed in the first ranks of search results page and being found by potential travellers. Top five travel meta search engines are Google Travel, TripAdvisor, Wego, Kayak, Skyscanner and Trivago. Meta search engines provide increased online brand visibility, price transparency and comparison, increased bookings, informed choice and better decision making through customer reviews. Online indirect distribution through travel meta search engines has also some disadvantages such as the cost of being listed in the travel meta search engines, and the risk of not being noticed in the search engine results pages.

2.4.3 Online Indirect Distribution through Online Travel Agents

Online travel agencies (OTAs) are online intermediary businesses that sell individual tourism and hospitality services or package tours on behalf of the service provider for a certain amount of commission or markup. In general, online travel agencies do not buy in bulk from individual service providers. They charge a commission when a property is booked. They use application programming interface (API) technology to access service providers' rates and inventory. They offer a variety of services including travel information, booking, package tours, travel insurance, etc.

Figure 4: Online Indirect Distribution through Online Travel Agents (OTAs)

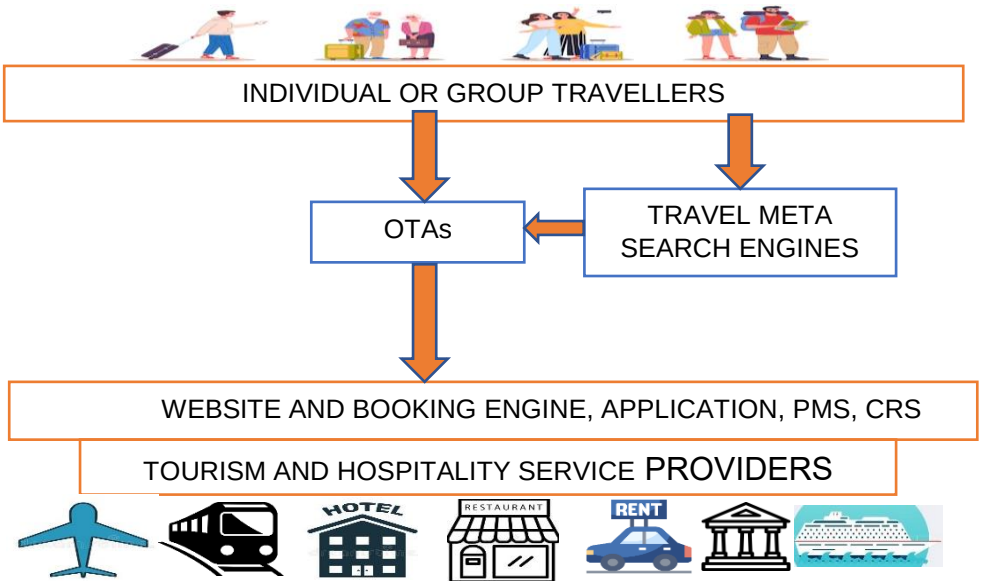


Table 2: Major Online Travel Agency Groups

Online Travel Agency Group	Sub-Brands	Worldwide Share of Revenue-2021 (%)
Booking Holding	Booking.com, Priceline, Agoda, Rentalcars.com, Kayak (Meta travel search engine), Opentable, Rocketmiles, Fareharbor, Hotelscombined, Cheapflights, Momondo	**35**
Expedia Group	Expedia, Hotels.com, Orbitz, Travelocity, Hotwire, Wotif, Trivago (Meta travel search engine), Ebookers, Vrbo, Cheap Tickets Expedia Media Solutions, Expedia Partner Solutions.	28
Airbnb	Airbnb Plus, Beyond by Airbnb	19
Trip.com	Ctrip, Qunar, Skyscanner (Meta travel search engine)	10

Source: Sub-brands are compiled from company websites. Revenue shares are from https://www.statista.com/statistics/935028/revenue-distribution-of-leading-otas-worldwide/

Travel agents can specialize in serving specific market segments (business travellers) or selling products of certain service provider (cruise). Online travel agencies can be reached directly or indirectly through travel meta search engines by visitors (Figure 4). Four OTA groups, namely Booking Holding, Expedia Group, Airbnb and Trip.com dominate the online world travel market (Table 2). Online travel agencies account for 37% of the total online travel market worldwide and Expedia and Booking have the vast majority of OTA leisure and business travel market share in 2021 (PhocusWire, 2022). Some of these online travel agencies have their own travel meta search engines. For example, Booking Holding owns Kayak, Expedia owns Trivago and Trip.com owns Skyscanner. Main advantages and disadvantages of using online travel agents are summarised below.

Advantages Of OTAs for Service Providers:

- Increased online brand visibility.
- Increased market coverage and bookings.
- Price transparency and comparison.
- Reduced expenditure for online marketing.
- Trust gained through OTAs brand and customer reviews.

Disadvantages of OTAs for Service Providers:

- High commissions charged.
- Restrictive cancellation policy may deter demand.
- The need to invest in multi-channel management.
- Dependency on big OTAs.

Online travel agencies are a convenient online indirect distribution channels for small and medium sized tourism and hospitality businesses. Because most small businesses do not have the economic power or technical expertise for online (digital) or offline marketing across the world. Statistics show that the share of online hotel bookings by OTAs in Europe have risen from 19,3% in 2013 to 27.1% in 2021 and this trend is likely to continue (Schegg, 2022). Almost all of brick and mortar travel agents and tour operators like Tui and Thomas Cook have now online presence and they actually play the same role as online travel agencies for online travel buyers.

2.4.4 Online Indirect Distribution through Global Distribution Systems

A global distribution system (GDS) is a computerized network system that connects travel agencies with service providers. Global distribution systems are actually computer programs that travel agencies use when making real-time reservations for services such as hotels, airlines, car rentals, cruises and ferries, and trains. GDSs connect subscribed online and brick and mortar travel agencies with service providers (Figure 5). GDSs do not hold inventory of service providers. But they have computerized connectivity (usually through APIs) and have access to service providers database and reservation systems. A travel agency can check the availability of hotel rooms, flight seats or availability of rental cars on behalf of their clients and book through GDSs (Figure 5). Leading GDS systems are Amadeus, Sabre and Travelport (Travelport bought Galileo and Worldspan). Despite the growth of online travel agencies like Expedia and Booking, GDSs are still used to promote tourism and hospitality services to the business and corporate travel market globally (SiteMinder, 2022).

Figure 5: Workings of Global Distribution Systems

The pros and cons of using GDSs as online distribution channel is given below.

PROS:

- 24/7 access to service providers' inventory.
- Effective in attracting international travellers, especially business travellers.
- Pricing transparency and offer of best rates to customers.
- Making service providers' product available to many international clints and saving on marketing expenditure.

- Good business model for travel agents (online and offline).

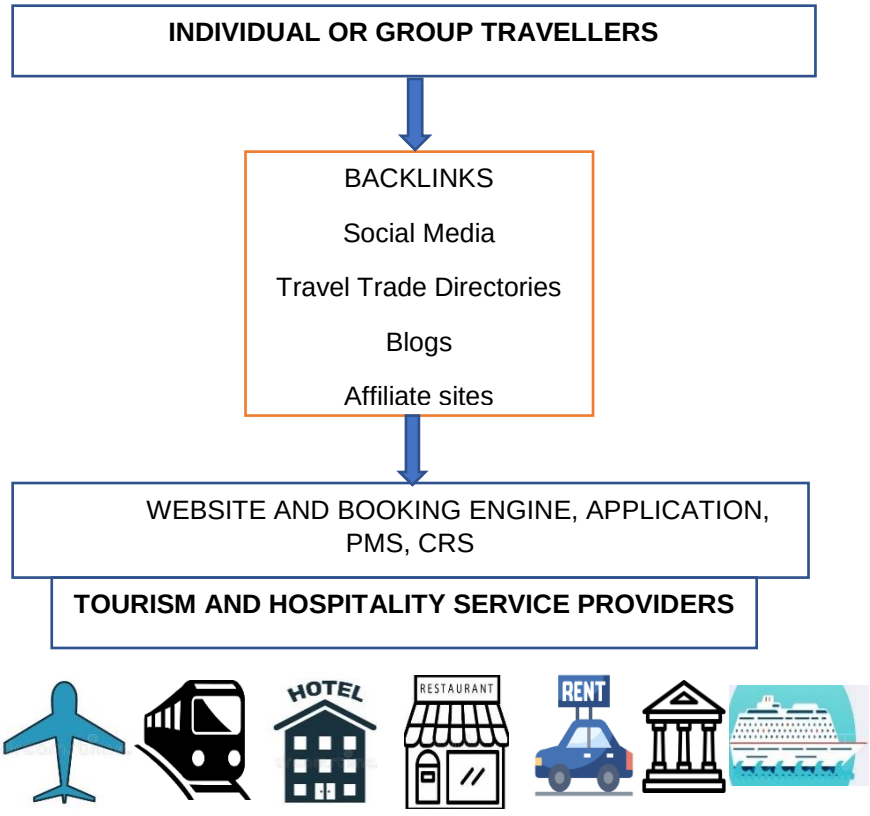
CONS:

- High cost for service providers (commission for travel agents and access to GDSs).
- Cost of managing different online channels in the face of changing inventory and prices.

2.4.5 Online Indirect Distribution through Backlinks

Backlinks, also called inbound links or incoming links, are links from one website to another website with an anchor text (Moz, 2022). Backlinks on social media, travel trade directories, blogs and affiliate sites can serve as an indirect distribution channel

Figure 6: Online Indirect Distribution through Backlinks



for tourism and hospitality business (Figure 6). Backlinks can divert traffic to service providers' website. Backlinks can also help service provider be found in search engines.

Therefore it is important for tourism and hospitality business to have backlinks on their social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn), major business and travel directories (Yellow pages, Google Business Profile, Wikivoyage, The Bed & Breakfast Directory, Foursquare, Lonely Planet etc.), travel blogs and affiliate sites.

2.5 Choosing Online Distribution Channels

There are a number of factors that should be considered when determining the online distribution channels and These factors are briefly review below (Hudson and Hudson, 2017).

1-Market Coverage: Online distribution channel should be covering service provider's target market in terms of geography, language and demography. For example, if a tourism and hospitality business targets potential visitors in Brazil and wants to use OTAs as distribution channel, then it should have connectivity with OTAs such as Despegar and Decolar which have high market share in this country. On the other hand, if a tourism business targets potential visitors in China, it should have online connectivity with Trip.com (Ctrip).

2-Cost of Distribution Channels: The cost of distribution should not be high and drain on profitability.

3-Value Positioning and Image: There should be a congruence between image of prospective online distribution channel and value position and image of the tourism and hospitality business. For example, a luxury five star hotel using dorms.com as distribution channel would not be appropriate. Dorms.com is a distribution channel for hostels and student accommodation.

4- Motivation of the Distribution Channels: Distribution channels should have the motivation to feature and sell service providers' services.

5- Characteristics of the Service Provider: There should be fit between business concept, product features of the service provider and online distribution channels used. For a full service luxury hotel, cheapoair.com would not be the ideal distribution channel because cheapoair.com target budget travellers.

2.6 Conclusion

More and more travellers are turning to online distribution channels for searching for and buying tourism and travel related products. For this reason, it is important for tourism service providers to understand the online buying process and behaviour of potential visitors and various online distribution channels that can be used. This module has looked at the online travel buying process and behaviour (recently termed as online consumer journey), the factors that affect online buying of potential visitors as well as online direct and indirect distribution channels that can be used by tourism and hospitality businesses. Finally, factors tourism and hospitality businesses need to consider when selecting online distribution channels are summarised.

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Assessment Questions

1) Which of the following concepts describe processes involved when consumers select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy their needs and desires?

a) Consumer behaviour b) Customer satisfaction c) Customer loyalty

d) Customer value

2) Which of the following factors influence online buying behaviour of travellers?

a) Perceived risk b) Trust in the website c) Website quality **d) All of them**

3)Which of the following is not among top three online information sources for leisure and business travellers.

a) Search engines b) Service provider websites c) Online travel agencies d**) Social networking sites**

4)Online distribution through online travel agents (OTAs) represent one of the direct online distribution mechanisms for tourism and hospitality service providers.

a) True **b) False**

5)Travel meta search engines are platforms that make reservations on behalf of travellers.

a) True **b) False**

6) Global distribution systems are online intermediary businesses that sell individual tourism and hospitality services or package tours on behalf of the service provider for a certain amount of commission or markup

a) True **b) False**

7) …….. …….. are the organisations that make products available to consumers for use and consumption.

a) Product manufacturers **b) Distribution channels** c) Marketing organisations d) Communication channels

8) High commissions charged is one of the …….. of online travel agents for tourism and hospitality service providers.

a) Advantages **b) Disadvantages** c) Channels d) Website

9) What is the right order of the circular consumer buying process, also named as consumer journey or consumer decision journey?

1)Triggers

2)Evaluation of alternatives

3)Moment of purchase

4)Initial consideration

5)Post purchase experience

a)12345 b)54321 **c)14235** d)34215

10) Please match the concepts on the left with the correct definitions on the right.

1-Backlinks	a) It is one of the big online travel agency groups
2-Travel Meta Search Engine	b) They are links from one website to another website with an anchor text
3- Loyalty loop	c) Thy are search engines for finding, listing and ranking travel and tourism service providers' websites by way of keyword search
4- Expedia Group	d) It refers to the automatic buying behavior of satisfied consumers when the same need, want, or problem is triggered again

a) 1a, 2b, 3c, 4d **b) 1b, 2c, 3d, 4a** c)1c, 2d, 3a, 4b d)1d, 2a, 3b, 4c

Module 3: Web Site Design and Website Quality for Small and Medium Sized Tourism Enterprises

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Learning Objectives

After reading this module, the reader will be able to:

- understand major terms relating to websites and internet presence of firms;
- distinguish benefits and downside of having a website for a business;
- remember the strategic issues and decisions involved in constructing a website;
- have an idea about the main dimensions of a high-quality website for tourism and hospitality businesses;
- knows legal framework and security standard for the privacy, data protection and security of the online platforms;
- tell ways and means of driving traffic to a website.

3.0 Introduction

The digitalization process and internet gave remarkable opportunities for small and medium sized tourism enterprises (SMTEs) in the tourism industries. On January 1, 1983 a new communications protocol was established called Transfer Control Protocol/Internetwork Protocol (TCP/IP). But online shopping only became possible when the internet was opened to the public in 1991. Amazon was one of the first ecommerce sites in the US to start selling products online and thousands of businesses have followed since. The first online travel agency was launched in 1996 with the creation of Travelocity (now owned by Expedia Group). Travelocity became the first website to allow consumers to reserve and purchase tickets through its website. The same year bookings.nl was also founded, which merged in 2000 with Bookings Online becoming Booking.com. Other sites followed of course. Reviews followed and were at first limited to the travel agency websites and a few travel blogs. The rise of the internet and the shift towards ecommerce in the travel industry also meant that a presence of

SMTEs on the worldwide web became an absolute must in order to grab a part of the ecommerce cake. Interaction with customers happened as well as reviews appeared online.

Then came the rise of social media in the late 1900s in the form of blogging platforms, Blogger for instance launched in 1999 and people started to share their own reviews outside the Travel Agency run websites. But it was only with the launch of Myspace (2003), Facebook (2004), YouTube (2005) and Twitter (2006) that social media really exploded in terms of usage. The first social media site to reach a million monthly active users for instance was MySpace around 2004. Note that MySpace, once a dominant platform, has since lost lots of its appeal with a steady decline in usage. The second wave of social media platforms started with Pinterest and Instagram (both in 2010) and Snapchat (2011) who focussed mostly on images and videos. The third wave started just a few years ago with the launch of TikTok in September 2017. By mid-2018 it had already reached half a billion users gaining on average about 20 million new users per month over this period of time. Social media offered consumers the possibility to engage with social networking sites to research trips, make informed decisions about their travels and share their personal experiences of a particular hotel, restaurant or airline.

For SMTEs, a presence on these social platforms became key as well, however, it also included a big risk, and that is losing control of their online presence. Many SMTEs have since neglected having an own website staying active only on social media platforms. Changing algorithms, declining non-paid reach (referred to as organic reach), and increasing costs to pay for promotion on the platforms results in an online presence that comes and goes with the new rules imposed by the platform. Add to this that several platforms which were once hugely successful disappeared or declined in usage (MySpace, Friendster, LiveJournal etc.). Focusing solely only on a social media presence therefore is and will remain a very bad decision.

The internet has over the years changed how European travellers research and book their holidays. Nowadays, you find and can reach your customers online via your website, via online platforms, via online advertising, rather than at a trade fair or via paper brochures. The internet has become the main traffic source for the tourism industry. The majority of the tourism business have access to online platforms and

those who are not using it will do so pretty soon. According to research in 2015, 99 % of businesses in the EU tourist accommodation sector had access to the internet, 95 % had a website or a homepage, and 74 % provided online reservation or booking options (Niestadt, 2018). On the other hand, in the EU, only 68% of internet users ordered goods or services online. And only 49% of internet users booked their holiday accommodation or travel via the internet (Eurostat, 2018). Nevertheless, it provides direct contact between the service provider (tourism industry) and the customer. Furthermore, social media inspire your clients and allow them to share their experiences. The share of individuals participating in social networks in Europe, 2018, is 56%. By February 2020, 70% of social media users used Facebook while, 10% used Twitter, 9% Pinterest, 8% Instagram, YouTube 2% (Statcounter, Global Stats, 2020). Note that Instagram is quickly gaining speed.

The tourism sector has been and still is an early adopter of digital technologies. As consumer purchase behaviour is changing, quick and easy online booking is becoming a main sales channel for tourism products (https://www.cbi.eu/node/2603/pdf/). The only online presence you can control for the full 100% is your own website. Combined with social media efforts through channels such as Instagram, Facebook you are able to get the best of both worlds while controlling as much as possible your online presence and collecting your own data for marketing purposes.

This module underlines the importance, benefits and construction of websites for tourism and hospitality businesses. It starts with introducing the basic terms and concepts related to website development and internet presence. After that it addresses the strategic and critical issues to consider in the construction of a website and to establish online presence. Then, the module focuses on the element of website quality and fundamentals of designing a website for tourism purposes, and how to promote it, while taking into account the legislations that influence online presence. It comprises the essential phases of the website design process as well as tips for beginners: website installation process with technical and practical footage; business specific tips and recommendations; and examples.

3.1 Websites and Relevant Terms

A web page (or webpage or website) is a specific collection of information provided by a website and displayed to a user in a web browser. A website typically consists of many web pages linked together in a coherent fashion. In order to understand fully what a web page or website is, we first explain a few terms relating to internet and websites.

- **World Wide Web:** The World Wide Web (WWW), commonly known as the Web, is an information system where documents and other web resources are identified by Uniform Resource Locators (URLs, such as https://example.com/), which may be interlinked by hypertext, and are accessible over the Internet. The resources of the Web are transferred via the Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) and may be accessed by users of a software application called a web browser. The World Wide Web is not synonymous with the Internet, which pre-existed the Web in some form by over two decades and upon which technologies the Web is built.
- **Interactive Terminal Protocol (ITP)**: An early Packet Assembler/Disassembler protocol for use on X.25 networks
- **The File Transfer Protocol (FTP):** It is a standard network protocol used for the transfer of computer files between a client and server on a computer network.
- **The Domain Name System (DNS):** is a hierarchical and decentralized naming system for computers, services, or other resources connected to the Internet or a private network. It associates various information with domain names assigned to each of the participating entities, more specifically to the numerical IP addresses needed for locating and identifying computer services and devices with the underlying network protocols.
- **Web Browser:** A web browser (or browser) is a software application for accessing information on the World Wide Web. When a user requests a web page from a particular website, the web browser retrieves the necessary content from a web server and then displays the page on the user's device. Users can access websites on a range of devices, including desktops, laptops, tablets, and smartphones.
- **Hypertext Markup Language (HTML):** It is the standard markup language for documents designed to be displayed in a web browser. It can be assisted by

technologies such as Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) and scripting languages such as JavaScript.

- **Cascading Style Sheets (CSS):** It is a style sheet language used for describing the presentation of a document written in a markup language such as HTML.
- **Content management system (CMS):** It is a computer software used to manage the creation and modification of digital content and thus create dynamic websites.
- **Domain Name:** A domain name identifies a network domain, or it represents an Internet Protocol (IP) resource, such as a personal computer used to access the Internet, a server computer hosting a website, or the web site itself or any other service communicated via the Internet.
- **The Internet Protocol (IP):** It is the principal communications protocol in the internet protocol suite for relaying datagrams across network boundaries. Its routing function enables internetworking, and essentially establishes the Internet.
- **Web Server:** A web server is server software, or a system of one or more computers dedicated to running this software, that can satisfy client HTTP requests on the public World Wide Web or also on private Local Area Network (LANs) and Wide Area Network (WANs).
- **Web Hosting Service or Provider:** A web hosting service or provider is a type of Internet hosting service that allows individuals and organizations to make their website accessible via the World Wide Web.

The content of a website can be shown in two ways:

- As a static website that has web pages primarily coded in Hypertext Markup Language (HTML). Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) are used to control the appearance beyond basic HTML.
- As a dynamic website using a CMS that changes or customizes itself frequently and automatically using CGI, Java Servlets and Java Server Pages (JSP), Active Server Pages and ColdFusion (CFML). Various web application frameworks and web template systems are available for general-use programming languages like Perl, PHP, Python and Ruby to make it faster and easier to create complex dynamic websites.

3.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of a Website for a Tourism Business

Having a website offer a lot of advantages for tourism businesses and they are briefly reviewed below.

- **Own your brand or name:** This is by far the most important advantage of having a website. By creating a site and hosting it on your own domain name (www.businessexample.com) you will own your brand or name on the World Wide Web. You can easily improve your brand identity when needed.
- **Own your communication:** Having an own domain name also ensures you of having a unique business email that will add to that sense of branding as well (yourname@businessexample.com). As a business you must at all cost avoid using a generic email account such as Gmail, Hotmail, etc.
- **Professional presence on the World Wide Web:** When well-built, it adds towards the credibility and professional presence of your company.
- **Being an authority in your domain:** Especially for businesses working in a niche industry, having a website is an excellent opportunity to build your reputation as an authority in your field. This can be done by starting a blog. The increased quality content will also increase the number of people finding you in search engines such as Google. This does require an SEO friendly writing.
- **SEO available:** You can use SEO (Search Engine Optimization) tactics to improve your rankings in search engines like Google.
- **Search engine marketing possible:** When you own your own website you can use advertising on search engines (search engine advertising) to attract customers searching for what you offer.
- **More qualified lead generation:** You can determine what data you need from your clients when they complete a lead and own the whole process with follow-up etc. Other platforms will have seriously limitations as to what data you can obtain and use. Most importantly, people visiting your site have been looking for your product and will often convert more than when you try to get leads on other internet platforms. This translates in lower acquisition costs.
- **Building a mailing list:** You can add a form to your web page so that visitors can subscribe to your newsletter. E-mail marketing still remains more (cost & quality) effective in acquiring new customers than social media (paid or

organically). In the long run it avoids that you have to pay to reach your contacts, which is increasingly the case on social media.

- **Save money on printing:** Whereas paper catalogues and brochures can still be helpful, it is much easier to have all relevant info on your website.
- **Effective online ads:** Online ads are more cost effective than ads in newspapers and magazines (unless you get free articles in the form of news regarding your company), can be targeted better and can be better budgeted (if an online ad doesn't convert, you stop or change it).
- **Avoid commissions:** If you use your own web page to get bookings or sales you will not need to pay a commission to 3rd parties such as Booking.com or Airbnb which often is in the range of 15% (up to 20% as they started using variable rates depending on their own guest value rating also known as Genius 1 up to 3).
- **Get extra data:** If someone visits your website you can see what pages they visit the most, how long they stay on your website, what pages don't convert and so on. This is all data which you will never get when you use a social media platform for instance.
- **Convert website users along the way:** You can pitch new products and services to your website visitors while they are looking through your website using non-intrusive popups for instance. Visitors leaving your page can also be triggered to stay on your page or to contact you so you can hopefully convert them after all.
- **Promote your brick-and-mortar locations:** You can direct your online visitors to your offline brick and mortar locations for special actions. Mobile users can also find your address better this way, see when you are open and visit your location.

There are also some disadvantages that may arise as a result of having a website and they are summarised below.

- **Technical knowledge needed:** If you maintain your own website, you will need technical knowledge in order to make sure that the website remains online. It also means extra work to maintain servers, keep the CMS software and the plugins up to date, and purchase licenses for software use.

- **Crashes and uptime:** You need to keep your website online, preferably 24/24. But websites can crash and need maintenance. If your website is often having uptime problems then this will reflect badly on your image. If your website is often down your search engine ranking will be affected.
- **Increased security efforts:** As the World Wide Web grows, so do also the number of attacks grow on websites. This means that you will need to invest in securing your web page even more. It also means that you need to plan more backups in order to be able to restart your business in the event of a hack and at the same time invest in IT knowledge or consultants in order to stop the web page from being hacked.
- **Difficultly reaching your target audience:** Despite search engine optimisation (SEO) efforts you might encounter problems finding your audience or future clients. This can especially be the case in domains where there is a lot of online competition. Paid promotion and continuous good content both on your own web page and on social media can strengthen your rankings in search engines.
- **Extra work and costs:** Despite the benefits of having your own web page, you will be confronted with an extra workload and costs which at first will not be reflected in immediate results. Perseverance is needed in order to upscale both on and off line. The same goes for content and visuals, all this needs either to be made in house or outsourced.

A website for SMTEs offers not only the opportunity to be visible globally but it is also a way of generating extra income, generating extra bookings and/or attract people to your site away from a booking platform. A lot of holiday goers might check out your business on a platform, but they will often also check if you have an own website to make direct bookings. It's an opportunity to upsell or offer them a more personal touch. With the massive influx of other online platforms seemingly popping up every other week, tourism business marketers sometimes tend to place a greater emphasis on developing their presence on these channels and may forget about the importance of building a strong website. While having brand recognition is an important driving factor, creating your vanity website is vital to driving bookings, revenue, and filling up the average daily rate (ADR). Next to this, a website offers you stronger search engine optimisation capabilities. This can be achieved by improving your keywords, headers, social media links, and being maintained frequently with fresh and important content to travel shoppers. Having an own website therefore also comes with

added responsibility and maintenance. So, you will need to be technically competent and provide regular updates. In addition to that, SMTEs should seek to have a website for improving online presence for competitiveness and growth. Moreover, it will bring an optimistic perspective about future opportunities, addressing seasonality, and extending their network (Dredge, et. al., 2019). Websites for SMTEs can have an effect on purchase/booking intention, customer satisfaction, customer trust, e-word of mouth, repurchase intention and e-loyalty.

3.3 Key Considerations for Development of Websites

An effective website is essentially about the convergence of two things: your business goals and the needs of your target market (Ryan, 2014). The website creation process can be done by the company themselves or can be outsourced. In both cases following activities will have to be undertaken:

- **Technical**: Technical staff are involved in the development of the website (in cooperation with a designer). This activity can be done in-house as platforms like WordPress offer a huge range of tools to build and maintain an own website without the need for a fully-fledged IT department, or can be outsourced.
- **Content**: For the website, a content provider must be identified who acts as an intermediary between the original creators of the work and the people who view or read it. This is normally maintained in-house, often via the Marketing/PR division. For smaller hotels it will be the owners who can generate content to be used on the website.
- **Marketing:** Your marketing assistant or designated marketing aid, or marketing department promotes your business and drives sales of your products or services. They also assist you in identifying your target customers and other audiences. They can increase the reach of your online presence via content and online promotion activities.

3.3.1 Deciding Website Developer: Outsourcing or Insourcing

You have 2 main options to get a design for your website: Outsourcing and Build it in house or insourcing.

Outsourcing

When you outsource the design and web development of your website, you will contract a designer/developer to design the website for you. You might choose to go for outsourcing web development when internally the technical resources lack or if the cost (and learning curve) is considerably lower when outsourcing.

A web designer/developer is responsible for the design, layout but also the coding of a website as the layout will also include some plugins being added, etc. They are involved with the technical and graphical aspects of a website; how the site works and how it looks. They can also be involved with the maintenance and update of an existing site if you, or your personnel are not capable of doing this. The main advantage of hiring a web designer is clear: you pay for a well-defined design that will be suited to your requests and they handle the visual and technical side of the project.

When choosing your web design team, it's important to choose a flexible team that has certain expertise. You might want to check out various companies and sit with them before choosing which one you will take. It's not because they are housed in a huge building that they will be better than the 6-team member's strong team housed in a hangar. Know that you will also pay for the big building. If you choose this option, it is key to deliver your designer a well-described list of specifications. The reason for this is quite simple, you need to make sure that all eventualities are covered, or you will end up with continuous design changes further down the road, which might become very costly. Before you choose your preferred partner to construct your website, do the following:

- List all the potential web outsourcing vendors.
- Conduct vendor screening process (via e-mail, Skype interviews).
- Analyse the collected data (website, proposals, portfolios, references, resumes, tech capabilities and skills, years on the market, number of projects).

- Define clearly what the budget will be and what future enhancements will cost. Make sure that you have no unreasonable cost when the CMS needs to be upgraded. Some more exotic CMS systems need a major overhaul when there is an upgrade needed.
- Select the web development outsourcing company -> sign the contract -> negotiate your payment options.
- Arrange communication and project supervision process (utilize tools like Confluence, Invasion, Gdocs, JIRA, etc.)

Once you have chosen your desired web designer/developer, it's time to go to the specifications. When making your list of specifications you should address the following:

- **Define the extra value you expect from the site:** Do you want to generate extra bookings and/or do you want people to use your site for booking and not a booking platform?
- **Define who is your primary audience:** Do you prefer families, or not? do you have rooms for disabled people? then it needs to be clearly announced as well. Do you go for young people who only need a bed and a common living area? These are all different audiences that demand a specific approach regarding content, design, and functionalities.
- **Define the content:** Describe very well each section and page you want on your website and what it should hold. Make sure you have the content ready – or at least a rough idea of what you will put on the website before you start with the visual part, it will give you a better look how the site will be like once the web designer enters your content and it will save you from unnecessary and costly changes further down the road. It also gives you a better view of what you need content-wise.
- **Define how you will measure the success of your site:** Is it more (direct) bookings, more upscale packages, longer stays, reaching a different public?
- **Define how you can adequately maintain the finished site:** If you decide to keep the designer on board on a freelance basis, then stipulate well what the costs will be, this will be in hours per job executed. Clear agreements create long-lasting business agreements. Most importantly when outsourcing your design and web

development, make sure you have admin access to the complete website besides an extra editor access so that you don't get locked out if you would use another web designer.

- **Define who will have access:** It is key to define well each role of everyone who has access to the website. Each CMS will give you the possibility to attach roles to people working on the website, from editors to administrators each with his access to predefined parts of the website. It's important to define these as to avoid problems when someone without technical knowledge starts using your website. You wouldn't be the first to see a website go offline after an editor started cruising through the layout and CMS of a website, etc.
- **Define the technical aspects of the website:** Describe all functionalities you want to insert on your website and where you want to use them on your website. One of those technical aspects is also to make sure that your content can be correctly shared on social media.
- **Define if and what 3rd party services you need to connect in your online booking system:** If you use a 3rd party platform to handle your booking stream, then your own bookings which arrive via the website must be handled correctly by that 3rd party service. The same automatically goes for handling the cancelations and bookings via other platforms. This needs to be reflected in your booking module on your site.
- **Define the schedule:** What is the production schedule for the site including the intermediate milestones (where you can give feedback) and dates of delivery? These can of course change along the way, but they should be followed as thoroughly as possible.
- **Define clearly what the budget will be and what future enhancements will cost:** Make sure that you have no unreasonable cost when the CMS needs to be upgraded. Some more exotic CMS systems need a major overhaul when there is an upgrade needed.

Insourcing

When you build the design of the website in house, you have the advantage of being very closely involved in the website development. However, you will not get the extra feedback that an external web designer could give you. Make sure you have a dedicated team member working on it and let him write out the specifications. These will be the same as outlined above, except for the budget which will entirely depend on how much time you or your team member is working on it. If you decide to build your website in-house by your e-business developer, he/she will need the following skills (Gildner and Gildner, 2019):

- A solid understanding of HTML and its variants (e.g., HTML5)
- A solid understanding of CSS and ability to edit and customize existing CSS
- Being able to use FTP(S) and adjust file access properties
- Being able to register a domain and its subdomains, prepare hosting space, and configure DNS settings
- Being able to install and update 1 or more WordPress instances on a server
- Being able to purchase and install SSL certificates (dynamic or static)
- Being able to set up WordPress security, protecting your website from hacks and malware using free and/or paid plugins (e.g., Wordfence WordPress security plugin)
- Being able to maintain (edit and post) a WordPress site
- Being able to install and set up functionality plugins
- Being able to install and optimize SEO plugins
- Being able to install and set up caching plugins
- Being able to implement e-commerce solutions
- Being able to understand analytics provided by e.g., Google Analytics or a similar service, in order to optimize the website

When making your list of specifications for your dedicated team member you should address the same principles as explained above.

3.3.2 Choosing Website Construction Tool

Setting up a website can be done in-house by your technical team, or may be outsourced as outlined in previous sections. In the latter case, it is important to ensure that the content management itself (updating content, prices, pictures, etc.) remains in-house. Unless the company policy is to keep everything, content related also, outsourced. Technically, there are 3 specific ways to construct websites which are explained below (Neher, 2019).

- **A website builder:** there are various drag & drop solutions which offer you a very intuitive way of making a website. Although they are very easy to use and very cheap, they offer very limited functionalities and also make you very depending on the continuity of these platforms and the solutions they offer, for instance booking or payment options to name just two. If you only want a 'window' with static info and no functionalities, then this might be an option. But don't choose this option if you want to further develop your online presence. There are various website building solutions on the market and various domain registration / hosting companies also offer this: Google Sites, Wix, One.com, Websitebuilder.com, Squarespace.com, Godaddy.com, Weebly. Some, like Mobirise, help you create the website, download it and then use FTP to upload the complete website on your own host of choice. Again, this will come with limited functionalities though the design is very professional.
- **WordPress (or Other Open Source Platform Like Joomla, Drupal):** WordPress is a free open-source content management system (CMS) written in PHP and paired with a MySQL or MariaDB database. To function, WordPress has to be installed on a web server. It is one of the most used CMS worldwide and is being used by small and big companies because of its very well documented and supported community which offers a wide range of plugins (free and paid) to make the best out of your website. Although it's very easy to use, it will take some expertise to take your site to the next level. The CMS comes with easy to install templates – including several for SME's – in case you don't want to buy a template. In general, the learning curve for WordPress is very smooth which makes that adding or changing content is very easy and intuitive. However, do not underestimate the technical side once you want more complex functionalities or when you choose a hosting company which offers

you limited support (but more flexibility). If you want to make sure that your WordPress website runs smoothly without having to care of upgrades of the PHP for instance, then make sure to use a hosting company which offers you the option to install WordPress with one click. If you want more flexibility then it is advised to outsource the work or hire a dedicated e-business developer who then can also take care of marketing your business online.

- **Custom development:** A small portion of businesses will decide to build their websites themselves from scratch. This will be the case for those businesses where the website is their service with a lot of specific functionalities which are not covered by the WordPress ecosystem for instance. This solution will be expensive and will need constant maintenance if only for security. It however does not prevent you from also using a mix of custom-built functionalities incorporated into an existing CMS solution like WordPress for instance to decrease the technical workload. The reason is simple, don't fix what isn't broken and don't reinvent the wheel.

3.3.3 Considering Core Website Features

There are many features that you will need to operate your web presence via a Content Management System (CMS) or website builder.

- **WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) editor:** Editing content can now be done as you are editing a document using a word processor. This is possible via an intuitive WYSIWYG editor with preview functions, import capabilities for media elements (video, audio content, images, etc.). This is basically what you will use to provide content on your website. A WYSIWYG editor is standard with every well-known CMS.
- **Responsive design for mobile friendly websites:** An increasing number of customers will visit your website via their smartphone. For this reason, mobile-friendly web pages are an absolute must. Therefore, templates should be applied that automatically adjust to the size of the display. This is a responsive design. You can either have this designed or you can buy existing templates suited for your CMS and have it adapted accordingly to your needs.
- **Social media integration:** Website pages must show they are also present on online platforms. You can also use social media integration to support content

promotion capabilities including sharing buttons (and comment functions where suitable).

- **Built-in SEO tools:** Search engine optimisation is crucial to allow your website to be found among many others search results or to be found at all, without SEO you will not be found that's almost a certainty. Appearing on the first pages of the relevant search requests is made possible by having a website that is SEO-friendly (see module 5). Good website building software should have such SEO tools embedded that support page titles, headers, SEO-friendly URLs, meta tags, and meta descriptions.
- **Comprehensive search:** Your website should offer a proper and easy-to-use search functionality to assist your customers in finding what they are looking for. Otherwise, they will leave your website and this will result in a low conversion rate (the percentage of users who take a desired action, such as making a booking, buying a product, place a reservation, etc.).
- **Online booking/buying/ordering tool:** A tourism business website is only as good as its online booking tool. This booking tool needs to reflect the number of rooms available and should be kept in sync with the other platforms you use to avoid as much as possible double bookings. It's key that this tool is maintained accordingly. The main CMS solutions available all offer plugins with booking tools or you can make use of third-party solutions who will do the booking administration for you, this comes with a cost though which is usually a percentage of your turnover and/or a monthly subscription fee. It's up to the hotel or restaurant owner to look for the solution which is best manageable for his/her business. Smaller hotels will not need to use this kind of third-party players as they can handle the booking administration easily.

These are in short, the basic modern CMS's features which you should consider when selecting a CMS.

3.3.4 Selecting Content Management System

A CMS allows non-technical staff to maintain a website. In the early days of the internet, making a website required a working understanding of HTML (Hypertext Mark-up Language) while now, a set of credentials is all that is needed to log in to the CMS and start managing content. Simply put, a CMS takes care of the technical jargon and let technical/design staff focus on design and your content managers/providers on the content. The CMS works through templates (purchased, outsourced, or made in-house).

The most popular CMS platforms are in order of most used:

- WordPress (free and open-source) - https://wordpress.org/
- Wix (Free) - https://www.wix.com/
- Joomla! (free and open-source) - https://www.joomla.org/
- Drupal (free and open-source) - https://www.drupal.org/

It is also possible that you outsource the website to a company that offers its own proprietary CMS or website building platform. Note that this will come with less flexibility if you have not made a good executed roadmap with specifications. If you outsource your website, make sure to cover everything.

CMS vs. Website Builder

Website builders require no coding skills at all and offer a user-friendly interface (often click and drop) and tons of design opportunities. These are the best choice for non-techies like small businesses, but they are limited in customization. You are limited to the widgets or tools provided, and they are often not suited for tourism businesses. So, before you start with a website builder make sure to make a list with all the requirements your website needs to see if this solution will work for you.

On the other hand, CMS solutions offer much richer customization opportunities but they do require advanced skills to be handled effectively; and although the learning curve is not incredibly steep, a basic knowledge of setting up a website is required. We

do recommend CSM as the best solution for SMEs as they offer the flexibility required to manage a business also online. Before choosing your website builder you should check (Ryan, 2014):

- Their customers for recommendation.
- What is their online reputation like?
- Are they designing sites to be found?
- Do they adhere to web standards?

3.3.5 Choosing Domain Name

A domain name is often the first thing you need when starting a website. It is your digital address that people will use to get connected to your website. The domain is a bit of the URL (Uniform Resource Locator, the site address in your browser's search bar) that identifies a web page — in this case your website. You can register them separately, or a website builder company may suggest to do this for you when you sign up with them. You can also go for a domain provider who also offers hosting services like for instance one.com. Some popular domain name providers are godady.com, register.com, Gandi.net, one.com, etc. You can easily check if the name you want is available and how much it will cost to purchase the URL, or if already taken see if you can purchase it from the current owner. Additionally, it will also show you what the domain name and hosting costs cost as one packet. Here are a few rules to keep in mind when choosing a domain name:

- Make it relevant and make sure the domain matches what visitors expect to see when they visit your site.
- Keep it short and memorable.
- When using various words, make sure you put a – in-between the words, e.g., hotel-london.co.uk. Do not use more than 2 words separated by a -.
- Avoid numbers in the domain name.
- Check whether the branding doesn't already exist or you risk judicial problems further down the road.
- Use the domain extension that is used for your country: .be, .el, .tr, .es, etc.

Once you're sure about a domain, register it. It is possible that the URL purchasing is also provided through your selected hosting company or vice versa. Make sure to keep a backup of your credentials in order not to lose them. It might also be a good idea to order several years of domain registration, it often comes with a reduced price. Depending on the URL extension (.eu, .tr, etc.) prices may vary, but should not cost more than 30 Euros per year. We also recommend you make sure to have automatic renewal included.

3.3.6 Choosing Website Hosting Service

A host is the storage unit where your website content lives online. This can be either hosted by a third party or within your own company. Whenever someone enters your domain name in a web browser, the browser will fetch your website content from your website host. The type of hosting you choose depends on how many visitors you have coming to your website. The cost of your hosting will increase when more people visit your website as you will need to upgrade from basic to advanced hosting. Good advice when choosing your web hosting, whatever package you choose, make sure to include automatic backups in your package, this will provide you with a backup in case an error was created when adding a plugin for instance. There are 6 general types of website hosting:

Shared Hosting

Shared hosting is perfect for entry-level website hosting. You are sharing a server with other websites. With a shared hosting plan, all domains share the same server resources, such as RAM (Random Access Memory) and CPU (Central Processing Unit). The cost of shared hosting plans is therefore relatively low, making it an excellent option for website owners in their beginning stages. Shared hosting plans often come with many helpful tools such as website builders, WordPress hosting, and the ability to email clients. You are however limited on some levels: you will not be able to handle caching yourself (so do NOT include any caching plugin on your website in this case). Although shared hosting provides website owners with a more simplistic approach to the web, know that surges in usage can ultimately affect your website's user experience. Ultimately, shared hosting plans are ideal for website owners that do

not receive a large amount of web traffic. So, for hotel owners who have a small property, this might work very well.

Virtual Private Server Hosting

Virtual Private Server (VPS) hosting plan is the middle ground between a shared server and a dedicated server. It's ideal for website owners that need more control, but don't necessarily need a dedicated server. With VPS hosting each website is hosted within its own space on the server, though it still shares a physical server with other users. However, also, in this case, a VPS hosted website will not be able to handle incredibly high traffic levels or spikes in usage. Typically, VPS hosting is used by website owners who want dedicated hosting but don't have the technical knowledge needed. VPS hosting offers the cost benefits of shared hosting with the control of dedicated hosting.

Dedicated Server Hosting

With dedicated server hosting you have a server all to yourself and you don't need to share. This could also be physically within your company. Dedicated hosting gives website owners the most control over the server that their website is stored on. This means that you have full root and admin access, so you can control everything from security to the operating system that you run. Dedicated servers' cost is one of the most expensive web hosting options. Typically, they are used by website owners with high levels of website traffic, and those who require complete control of their servers. Besides, a high level of technical expertise is required for the installation and ongoing management of the server.

Cloud Hosting

In regards to web hosting, it means many computers working together, running applications using combined computing resources. It's a hosting solution that works via a network and enables companies to consume computing resources like a utility. This allows users to employ as many resources as they need without having to build and maintain their computing infrastructure. The resources that are being used are spread across several servers, reducing the chance of any downtime due to a server malfunction. Cloud-based hosting is scalable, meaning your site can grow over time,

using as many resources as it requires, and while the website owner only pays for what they need. Also, here a high level of technical expertise is required for the installation and maintenance (SSL, PHP upgrades, etc.), but it's way cheaper than a dedicated server.

Managed Hosting

Most hosting packages you will find online are likely to be managed. This means that the hosting companies also provide technical services such as hardware and software setup and configuration, maintenance, hardware replacement, technical support, patching, updating, and monitoring. With managed hosting, the provider looks after the day-to-day management of the hardware, operating systems, and standardized applications. They will then also make sure that your PHP is up to date and that you run the latest WordPress version (in case they do automatic updates).

Co-location

Instead of keeping servers in-house or at a private data centre, you may choose to "'co-locate" your equipment by renting space in a co-location centre. The centre will provide the power, bandwidth, IP address, and cooling systems that your server requires. Space is rented out in racks and cabinets. Co-location gives access to higher levels of bandwidth than a normal office server room at a much lower cost. You're left to your own devices (literally) and will be expected to take care of everything including the hardware, software, and services. It is important to make sure you can always upgrade your hosting program.

Select a hosting company that provides the necessary technical hardware and software to host your website. Especially when you combine it with online commerce, certain technical requirements must be met to make sure that you can run certain software. Often, hosting companies will have a host of (CMS) software available that you can install and use as part of your contract with them. Well known hosting companies in Europe can be found at https://reviewbridge.com/hosting/europe/. If all of the above is too complicated, you can also opt for website builders. These are all-in tools that require no additional management efforts, they are however limited when it comes to installing more personalized plugins for instance as you will see below.

3.3.7 Designing Websites

A good website design has a few core elements which should be present. This includes the following:

- Website navigation: the navigation must be easy to follow and clearly structured
- Website headers: this contains the main elements of the navigation and should be placed on top of every webpage. Included are the main menu, login details for website visitors (if required), search and contact details
- Correct layout: the layout should not hinder the web visitor when visiting and navigating through your website. It should also be coherent throughout your website. A contrasting colour scheme attracts the costumer's intention. Colours should be used to take their intention, but not harm their eyes.
- Visual identity: this happens in the form of logo, CSS (including font) and colour scheme use throughout the template. Also included are diagrams and infographics. Your website should be enhanced by relevant images and videos.
- Footer: The footer is placed at the bottom of every webpage and usually includes more info such as 'who are we', 'contact us', and also links to the main pages or even the entire sitemap in order to help SEO kick in.
- Use a simple sitemap
- Front-load information (put the most important information at the start)
- Be generous with visuals, but avoid flash animations, don't overdo it when you use sliders, usually 4 to 5 good images are enough
- Make it inclusive (people with vision impairments use screen readers, so be descriptive)
- Take care of your metadata (it is important for searching ranking)
- Address your social media accounts
- Social media accounts should be inserted on the main website
- Internal and external links should be shared.
- Other topics or services should not embower the main production/service.
- The website should provide effective communication between customers and service providers.
- Contact information (physical address, email address, phone number, links to social media pages) should appear on the website
- Reviews and testimonials can increase the advertisement effect.
- Everything should be clear and easy to use for everyone.

- Page load speed is important and avoids that people click away when the page loads to slow.
- Clearly state all policies (security policies and cookies should be located on the home page).
- Be upfront about your prices. It will increase customer trust. If you add tourist taxes upon check-in, then announce it you do so and how much it will be.
- Secure the checkout process using https (Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure). All information and payment details must be in safety.
- The website should be accessible and thus usable by people with disabilities.
- Make sure your site is responsive: Mobile compatibility is very essential. Your website should be eligible to reach on each technological device (responsive design). Your site should have a responsive web design so that your website renders well on a variety of devices and window or screen sizes, and especially on mobile devices as the use of this devices has literally exploded to visit websites, search engines etc. Normally, all templates that are available these days have responsive design baked into their core, however, when you start tweaking templates for your own website, do double check if the site keeps its responsive design intact. The fact that these templates also have responsive design is by far the biggest reason why you should purchase templates so you can adapt them to your business later on.

As important as the content of your website discussed further on, will be the layout of your website. You will want it to be clear, easy to use, and also working on mobile and desktops (aka responsive design).

3.3.8 Developing Website Content

Before you start with your website, you will need content, basically the most important thing when it comes to keeping websites up and running. No content means no website. Your website must, therefore, be populated with content that will not only interest the visitors but will also make sure that Google will start indexing your page correspondingly. This content should be provided by the relevant divisions within your company, the marketing one being the most important. The “freshness” of your content is also extremely important, both from a marketing and an SEO perspective. All content areas should be up-to-date and include the latest information on the hotel itself, new services and amenities, and the most recent local area content. Besides, best practices for optimum revenue-generating websites include travel booker friendliness, user

friendliness, search engine friendliness, mobile optimization, and social interactivity (Ismagilova, 2020).

There are two types of written content:

- Fix content: this is content that usually doesn't change, some is for information purpose, other is to specifically improve your SEO rankings.
- Sporadic new content aka news: this is new content that gets added over time, usually referred to as 'news'.

Fixed Content

This type of content is usually used to describe your business, the various options you offer, the privacy clauses, and also the content you will add for SEO purposes.

The content that is used to seduce the user should be written very clearly. In general, less is more is crucial here so that your potential customers can easily find what they are looking for. The specific content itself required will be addressed further in this module.

The content that is used to make sure the "Googles" of the internet find and index your website easily should be larger and very much written with SEO in mind. For instance, if your hotel is based in Barcelona, you should make sure that you have a lot of content regarding Barcelona on your page, so that Google knows very well that your hotel is linked to Barcelona. We'll go into detail about how to write content for SEO purposes further on in this module.

As far as photos are concerned, you need to use your photo material for your website's main content. It might be wise to employ a freelance photographer to get the best out of your pictures.

Sporadic New Content Aka News

This is content that you will add in an ongoing fashion, the best way to describe this is considering it as news. Under the news you can find: new services you offer in your hotel, local big events, tips to visit the town, etc. there is a lot of ways you can use

this news section. To make this section work the best, you should in case of adding info on events use a calendar and foresee new content to go online at least a few months before an event so it gets indexed by Google. In case of non-event related info, you can just add it as it comes.

One good advice: use good pictures in your news articles which you or your staff can take. And make sure to add your personnel in the picture (when they agree to do so that is), this will also do well on social media as it increases the veracity of your post. In case you need other photos that you can't make, make sure to check out a service like Pixabay.com or UnSplash.com which give you access to freely usable images.

Attention: Because content may change, always preview changes to your website before publishing them. You need to be sure things are working the way you want them to. Some of the key questions to ask are:

- Is all the spelling and grammar, correct?
- If you want to add new buttons, are all the buttons on the menu working?
- Does your site fulfil your purpose?
- Is your formatting consistent, is the layout not suddenly completely different in the way you post news?

CMS's make previewing your site easy. There is always a preview functionality available in the CMS we discussed earlier on to see what your website or news post would look like live. Most also offer a toggle so you can see how it works on different screen sizes, if you chose for responsive design – highly recommended - this is not be something you should be looking at. Know that more than half of Google searches (and increasing) are carried out on a mobile (Social, 2017).

Qualitative Content Management Checklist

Following are tips for qualitative content management:

- Define your target users and write your content accordingly with keywords that address that user group.
- Use headings e.g., H1, H2, H3, etc.

- Hook your reader with facts, quotes, questions, etc.
- Address them personally: Your, you.
- Use simple language and small phrases.
- Be direct.
- Use a conversational tone.
- Use an active/positive language, avoid negative words like never, not, neither, etc.
- Keep it short.
- Layer your writing for skimmers and scanners.
- Leave out jargon: keep in mind that not every reader is a native speaker of the text he reads, and not everyone who is a native speaker knows the jargon.
- Proof-read properly.
- Develop well written and informative content.
- Content length should be determined based on the target group and post information.
- Grammar and spelling are essential, content language should be double-checked.
- Readability is very important. The text font should be aesthetic and clear enough to be read.
- Content should be formatted comprehensively.
- Content should be created based on facts and experiences.
- Awards and achievements should be displayed.

3.4 Elements of Quality Websites for Tourism and Hospitality Businesses

A good website should have excellent functionality, usability, security, and privacy are used to measure website quality (Ali, 2016). Otherwise, consumers will miss important functions because of poor usability or opt for alternative and expensive distribution channels or different hotels altogether (Qi, Law, & Buhalis, 2017).

3.4.1 Guidance List for Websites of Accommodation Businesses

Following content/menu elements should be available on your website(s):

- A Cookie Policy in the form of a banner is essential. A cookie policy is a declaration to your website visitors on what cookies (online messages for customers server) are active on your website, what user data they track, for what purpose. Many website owners choose to incorporate the cookie policy as a section of their privacy policy. But you will need to add a cookie policy banner either at the bottom of your page, the top, or the middle of the page (not preferred as it blocks the view of the rest of the page).
- Quality of the information on hotels website is essential to have attention of the customers. In addition, hotel managers should exert effort in achieving high-level information communication by utilizing their websites for effective customer relationship
- Management instead of merely for information dissemination after reaching the goal of basic level information provision (Law, 2019).
- According to researches on measuring the effectiveness of the hotel websites, four essential criteria are: customer orientation, marketing, technology, and security (Ostovare and Shahraki, 2019). The research finding shows that customer orientation is the most important criteria followed by marketing, security, and technology (Ostovare and Shahraki, 2019). Besides, most highly ranked hotels present higher performance and quality compared to hotels with a lower rank (Ostovare and Shahraki, 2019). On the other hand, another investigation shows that promotional information on hotel official websites is crucial. Customers are particularly interested in seeing seasonal discounts, long stay packages and members' rewards. Furthermore, customers are particularly concerned about purchase risk, as in the case of cancelation and refund policies (Lei and Law, 2019).

The expectations of tourists concerning a website vary depending on their origins. What a Turkish tourist considers vital for a website is not always the same like what a tourist from France will consider vital when visiting a tourism business website. As such it will be important to take this into consideration and apply the needs from your tourist in your tourism business website. If for example you have lots of tourists from a certain country, it is advised to consider the expectations and needs from these

tourists when building your website and put those website needs A review of the literature reveals the most important dimensions of a hotel website quality (Table 1).

Content/Menu Elements

Following content/menu elements should be available for hotel websites:

- Pop up: cookie policy
- Typical primary navigation menu
    - Hotel home
    - Amenities & Services
    - Maps & directions
    - Rooms & suites
    - Plan an event
    - Special offers
    - Dining
    - Things to do (which you should also update regularly when occasional events are taking place)
    - Online booking
    - Languages
    - Contact (leading to a form)
    - Telephone number

Table 1: Dimensions of Hotel service Quality

Country of Research	Dimensions of Hotel Website Quality	Sources
Vietnam	Information quality, security, ease of use, website design, website functionality, response time and interactivity.	Le, Nguyen, Nguyen and Pervan (2020)
Hong Kong	Facilities, customer contact, reservations, surrounding area, website management	Lei and Law (2019)
TripAdvisor	Web appearance, entertainment, information fit-to-task, transaction capability, response time and trust	Samad, Nilashi and Ibrahim (2019)
Turkey, Iran	Customer oriented criteria, technology-oriented criteria, marketing-oriented criteria, security-oriented criteria and other criteria.	Akincilar and Dagdeviren (2014), Ostavare and Shahraki (2019)
Egypt	Information content, website design, interactivity, responsiveness, ease of use, website appeal, innovativeness, marketing image, online processes and viable substitutes	Abou-Shouk & Khalifa (2017)
China	Usability, ease of use, entertainment, complementarity	Li, Peng, Jiang and Law (2017)
Serbia	Reservations information, facilities information, contact information, surrounding area information, website management	Stanujkic et al. (2017)
Usa	Perceived ease of use, perceived information quality, perceived privacy risk, perceived aesthetics	Xu (2017)
China	Usability attributes (navigation, ease of use-website friendliness, language, overall layout and appearance) and functionality attributes (hotel general information, reservation information, website management, surrounding area information	Qi, Law and Buhalis (2017)
Australia	Process quality (reliable information, locality information, functionality) and Environmental quality (atmospheric quality, customer review, emotional engagement)	Hahn et al. (2017)
China	Website usability, website functionality, website security and privacy	Wang et al. (2015)
China	Information quality, service quality, accessibility, trust and privacy	Liu and Zhang (2014)
Iran	Hotel information, product information, non-product information, payment, customer relationship management, and reservation	Salavati and Hashim (2015)
China	System quality, information quality, and service quality	Zhou (2011)
	Hotel facilities information, reservation information, contact information, surrounding area information, website management, hotel star category	Rong et al. (2009)
	Technical, marketing, internal, customer	Morrison et al. (1999)
Spain and Brazil	Promotion, price, product, multimedia, navigability, reservation system, customer retention, privacy and security	Schmidt et al. 2008
China	Functionality (purchase information, product/service information, destination information, quality of information, contact information), Usability (language, layout and graphics, information architecture, user interface and navigation, general)	Bai et. al. (2008)

Hong Kong	Reservations information; facilities information; contact information; surrounding area information; website management	Law and Hsu (2006)
Hong Kong	Accessibility; navigation; website friendliness; language and overall layout; and appearance	Au Yeung and Law (2006)
Greece	Facilities, guest contact, reservation or price information, surrounding area, website management, and company profile	Zafiropoulos and Vrana (2006)
China and USA	Hotel general information, reservation information, website management; and surrounding information	Liang and Law (2003), Law et al. (2004)
USA	Information accuracy, clarity, completeness, ease of use, navigational quality and colour combinations	Jeong, Oh and Gregoire (2003)
USA	Information quality related to perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived accessibility, and attitude,	Jeong and Lambert (2001)

    - COVID-19 prevention information and how you address it
- Typical secondary navigation menu
    - Social media links
    - Main corporate website
    - About
    - Hotel affiliates
    - Locations
    - Site map
    - Careers
    - Development
    - Media
    - Shop our products
    - Web accessibility
    - Customer support
    - Direct (inter)national phone number
    - Discount terms & conditions
    - Global privacy statement
    - Personal data requests
    - Do not sell my information
    - Cookies statement
    - Cookie preferences
    - Site usage agreement

- Content
    - Events
    - Food
    - Tourist attractions
    - Weather forecast
    - Remarks from previous customers or service providers
- Integration with third-party providers -
    - Booking.com
    - Roomkey.com
    - TripAdvisor
    - Recommended Taxi Services
- Catering company
    - Restaurant menu
    - Café
    - Cleaning Principles
    - Online reservation platforms

3.4.2 Guidance List for Websites of Restaurants

Research has shown that a quality restaurant website should have content relating to information, interactivity, e-commerce and additional values (Daries et. Al., 2018). This content can be defined as following:

Information about the restaurant

- Description of the restaurant (type of food, menu, chef, etc.)
- Images of the restaurant
- Prices
- Opening days and hours
- Announcement of news and events
- Information about location (maps, geolocation, etc.)
- Link to review websites (TripAdvisor, Yelp, ...)
- Season status (open/closed)

Services

- Information about the reservation
- Information about parking
- Information about home delivery
- Information about catering
- Information about cooking classes

Surroundings

- Tourist information on the area (tourist attractions, weather, etc.)
- Links to other tourist establishments (accommodation, activities, etc.)

Promotion and advertising

- Promotion and advertising on the website
- Online incentives (coupons, website-only promotions, etc.)

Interaction with the customers

- E-mail address and telephone number of establishment
- Online direct comments from customers
- Instant messaging (Skype, Zoom, Teams, Google Talk, etc.)
- Online surveys
- FAQ
- Newsletter option
- Membership system
- Quality/satisfaction rating option

Interaction with customers through 2.0 website

2.0 website technology

- Really Simple Syndication (RSS)
- Podcasts/vodcasts
- Apps to allow customers to post content
- Possibility of sharing content with friends (9share, retweet, etc.)

Social media presence

- Link to twitter
- Link to company's blog
- Link to other picture and video platforms (YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, etc.)
- Link to company's social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc.)
- Link to Wikipedia

Multilingual capability

- The website is available in more than one language

E-commerce

Online purchasing options

- Gift vouchers
- Reservation online

Payment and safety service

- Online payment
- Safety security (https, safe payment platforms such as PayPal, Swipe, etc.).

Additional values

Data privacy

- Mentioning the data protection act and GDPR

Certifications

- ISO 9000 quality certification
- Q mark for tourist quality certification
- ISO 14000 environmental certification
- Other certifications (information security ISO 27000, OSHAS 18000 etc.)

Mobile version of the website

- Mobile version of the website available
- Mobile app version of the website available

Another research revealed four dimensions of website quality for food service businesses: visibility (number of hits and number of external links to the site, ranking in search engines), Speed (access speed and response time), Navigability (quick access menu, a site map, keyword search function and content (Miranda, Rubio, & Chamorro, 2015).

With regard to content of quality websites, 'web assessment index' includes 31 features that should be on the website of foodservice businesses (Miranda, Rubio & Chamorro, 2015):

• Telephone

• Address

• E-mail

• Online form: information

• Online form: comments

• Online: reservations

• E-mail reservations

• Mobile phone reservations

• The personnel

• Menu

• Prices

• Special offers

• Publications

• History

• Multilingual

• Photos of dishes

- Photos of the premises
- Video
- 360-degrees photos of the premises
- Location map
- GPS
- Jobs
- Recipes
- Cultural and natural environment
- Features and style of the premises
- Wine cellar
- Press/news
- Recommend to a friend
- Social networks
- Blog
- Newsletter

Most of the restaurants are aware of the importance of being present on online platforms. A restaurant's website design contributes to building its reputation and prestige, facilitates tourists' access to information on dining options when planning their trip, allows them to easily book the restaurant's services, and provides them with the geographic location when they are unfamiliar with the city in which the restaurant is located (Miranda, Rubio, & Chamorro, 2015). Additionally, it is necessary for these restaurants to look beyond traditional presence and foster online interaction and collaboration, connectivity and the possibility of generating and sharing content and knowledge with users by means of Web 2.0 techniques (Daries, et. al., 2018). When designing the restaurant's website, a series of guidelines should be followed and a set of fundamental elements included based around the four dimensions proposed here: information, communication, e-commerce and additional values tools (Daries, et. al., 2018).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, it's imperative to show that hygiene is a primary factor in your business and that you have an action plan in place. It is therefore also important to keep your (future) guests informed off the efforts you do, whether you're closed or not. Make use of your social media channels and emails to inform your public of the situation and the options you are still able to offer. It's also good practice to immediately update your website, Google My Business profiles, and other digital assets to indicate the status of your physical location and how your business will be available for the foreseeable future.

When you communicate with your (future) guests:

- Stay positive.
- Present a prevention plan where you show how you will implement social distancing and how your business will implement all hygienic guidelines.
- Present them with an alternative to still enjoy your cuisine.

If your business can only operate via take away due to lock down, consider selling warm meals which can be safely collected at the restaurant. This will require some measures and be prepared to answer questions, hence plan ahead and create a FAQ for your digital channels:

- Explain your procedures during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- If you are still open for customers, explain how you practice social distancing in the restaurant with limited staff.
- Explain how the staff's hands are washed even more often now;
- Be very clear on how payment will be addressed: is payment information taken over the phone or through a payment app, or via contactless payment?
- Does your staff bring the food out to customer's car and put it in the trunk for the customer?
- Explain the process of delivery in case of home delivery: the customer may want to talk with the delivery person and determine the best way to drop the food off (e.g., leaving it on the porch and texting that it's there).

- Explain customers should transfer the food to a different container, and wash their hands for at least 20 seconds.
- Provide if needed clean utensils in a sealed bag.
- Explain to customers to not put the takeout containers in the fridge, because that would just potentially contaminate the surface it's coming into contact with.

Following content/menu elements should be available for food and beverage businesses:

- Pop up: cookie policy
- Typical primary navigation menu
    - Menu
    - COVID-19 prevention information and how you address it
- Sections for dietary preferences
    - Restaurants
    - Online booking
    - Delivery
    - Careers
    - About us
    - Languages
- Typical secondary navigation menu
    - Social media links
    - Contact Us
    - Careers
    - About Us
    - Magazine
    - Poll
    - Advertise
    - Privacy Policy
- Content
    - Food
    - Menu
- Integration with third-party providers
    - Certificates

- Recommendation from customers or experts
- Online reservation platforms

3.4.3 Guidance List for Tearooms, Cafes and Pubs

A lot of cafés, pubs and tearooms are not aware of the importance of being present on online platforms. A website does contribute to building the reputation and prestige of your tearoom, café or pub offering the regulars and also possible visitors access to information on the beverages, cakes, etc. you offer. It should also provide your (future) public with the geographic location when they are unfamiliar with the city in which the tearoom, coffeehouse, pub or café is located (Miranda, Rubio, & Chamorro, 2015).

These businesses typically have more social interaction than any other business and this should be reflected in how you share content online and how you interact with your public.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, it's imperative to show that hygiene is a primary factor in your business and that you have an action plan in place to implement when you can open or when you are already back in business. Keep your (future) guests informed off the efforts you do, whether you're closed or not. Make use of your social media channels and emails to inform your public of the situation and the new projects (a new beer, a personalised beer, a new coffee mix, personalised cups for the regulars, …) you will be offering.

It's also a good practice to immediately update your website, Google My Business profiles, and other digital assets to indicate the status of your physical location and how your business will be available for the foreseeable future.

When you communicate with your (future) guests:

- Stay positive, nobody wants to visit a pub, café or tearoom where the owner is constantly negative on social media or on their website.
- Present a prevention plan where you show how you will implement social distancing and how your business will implement all hygienic guidelines.
- Present them with a future project to keep your business in the spotlight.

Each problem presents an opportunity. If you are creative now, you will be remembered for this as well and it could become part of your future business. In Belgium for instance there are several pubs who have now launched an own beer ready for pre-ordering in larger bottles.

Following content/menu elements should be available on your website(s):

- Pop up: cookie policy
- Typical primary navigation menu
    - Locations
    - Menu
    - Parties & Events
    - What's happening
    - Gift cards

    - Shop
    - Reservations
    - Languages
    - COVID-19 prevention information and how you address it
- Typical secondary navigation menu
    - Social media links
    - Corporate
    - Careers
    - Accessibility
    - Terms
    - News
    - Gift cards
    - Rewards
    - Privacy settings
- Content
    - Drinks
    - Food
    - Menu
    - A Special Concept (If they have)
- Integration with third-party providers
    - Live music/footage option
    - Online reservation platforms for breakfasts (baskets)

3.4.4 Guidance List for Websites of Travel Agencies

Travel agencies act as an intermediary and can offer quite an abundance of information on locations, hotels and transport. There are many dimensions of website quality for online travel agency websites and they are summarised in Table 2. Quality of the information on Travel Agency websites is essential to have attention of the customers.

Table 2: Dimensions of Website Quality for Online Travel Agency Websites

Country of research	**Dimensions of website quality**	**Source**
Vietnam	Information quality, service quality, ease of use, security, visual appearance, brand image, and price.	Pham and Nguyen (2019)
India	Trust, ease of use, tangibility, ease of booking, navigation, customization, system availability, responsiveness, and interactivity of eWOM (electronic word-of-mouth) systems.	Tandon, Sharma and Aggarwal (2019)
Egypt	Information content, website design, interactivity, responsiveness, ease of use, website appeal, innovativeness, marketing image, online processes and viable substitutes	Abou-Shouk & Khalifa (2017)
China	Visual appearance, information quality, ease of use, navigability, accessibility, interactivity, personalisation and flexible reservation	Sun, Cardenas and Harril (2016)
China	Customer relationships, information, security and function	Ho and Lee (2007), Ye, Fu and Law (2016)
China	Informativeness, effectiveness and entertainment	Gao and Bai (2014)
Taiwan	Information quality, system quality and service quality	Hsu, Chang, Chen (2012)
Taiwan	Process quality, outcome quality	Chen and Kao (2010).
Hong Kong	Website functionality, information quality and content, fulfilment and responsiveness, safety and security, appearance and presentation, and customer relationship	Tsang et al. (2010)
South Korea	Information content, reputation and security, structure and ease of use, and usefulness	Kim and Lee (2004)
Usa	Ease of use, information/content, responsiveness, fulfilment, and security/privacy	Park et al. (2007)
Spain	Ease of use, personalised service	Alvarez et. al. (2007)
Taiwan	Information quality, security, website functionality, customer relationships and responsiveness	Ho and Lee (2007)

It's the ideal hub to provide your target public with lots of possible package travels and options. Promotional information on a travel agency's official websites is also crucial. Customers are particularly interested in seeing seasonal discounts, long stay packages and members' rewards. Furthermore, customers are particularly with a crisis (airline companies going bankrupt, health crisis, …) concerned about purchase risks, e.g., in the case of cancellation and refund policies (Lei and Law, 2019).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, it's imperative to also focus on this matter when constructing your website as cancellations have been and may be more frequent now. Offer a flexible cancellation plan and offer to reschedule their planned trips, if possible, with added value (which you can discuss with your travel partners).

It's also good practice to immediately update your website, Google My Business Profiles, and other digital assets to indicate the status of your physical location and how your business will be available for the foreseeable future.

You should also stress that you check on the prevention plans present in the hotels and transport companies you work with so you can inform your clients correctly. Hygiene will play an important role in the years and decades to come. Showing that hygiene is a primary factor in your business and that you have an action plan in place to assure that your partners take this very seriously is key.

Added to this it is also important to keep your future public informed off the efforts you do in order to make sure they can book their future holidays at destinations that are safe.

Following content/menu elements should be available on your website(s):

- Pop up: cookie policy
- Typical primary navigation menu
    - Home Page
    - Amenities & Services
    - Maps & directions

    - Recommendations
    - Plan a trip
    - Special offers
    - Online booking
    - Languages
    - COVID-19 prevention information and how you address it
- Typical secondary navigation menu
    - Social media links
    - Main corporate website
    - Airline Services
    - Accommodation Services
    - Rental Cars
    - Advice for a Trip
    - Site map
    - Media
    - Online Reservation
    - Web accessibility
    - Customer support
    - Discount terms & conditions
    - Global privacy statement
    - Personal data requests
    - Do not sell my information
    - Insurance Policies
    - Cookies statement
    - Cookie preferences
    - Site usage agreement
- Content
    - Events
    - Campaigns
    - Tourist attractions
    - Weather forecast
    - Remarks from previous customers or service providers
    - Road Trips
    - Recommendation Lists
    - Help

- Integration with third-party providers
    - Rental Car Company
    - Transportation Companies
    - Accommodation Service Providers
    - City-Country Guideline Service Providers

3.5 Legislation to Respect and Conform

In this section, we will look at the legislative aspects you need to respect when offering your business services online.

Online/E-commerce is rapidly evolving and businesses are trying to adapt to these changes. If you are a business owner in the tourism industry, you should keep the legal aspects of e-commerce in mind when deciding to sell your products or services online. There are a string of mandatory elements for your website you need to respect, as well as you need to check your website's compliance. We will focus here mainly on the most recent General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

3.5.1 General Data Protection Regulation

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into effect on 25 May 2018. The key factors of the GDPR are simple: keep customer data secure and make marketing communications as clear as possible. This regulation applies to all European companies offering goods or services. While your company may not be based in Europe, if you desire to attract European customers, then it is recommended to respect GDPR guidelines. The GDPR spells out in Article 3 the territorial scope of the law: This Regulation applies to the processing of personal data in the context of the activities of an establishment of a controller or a processor in the Union, regardless of whether the processing takes place in the Union or not established in the Union, where the processing activities are related to:

(a) the offering of goods or services, irrespective of whether a payment of the data subject is required, to such data subjects in the Union;

(b) the monitoring of their behaviour as far as their behaviour takes place within the Union.

This Regulation applies to the processing of personal data by a controller not established in the Union, but in a place where Member State law applies by public international law. Article 3.1 states that the GDPR applies to organizations that are based in the EU even if the data are being stored or used outside of the EU. Article 3.2 goes even further and applies the law to organizations that are not in the EU if two conditions are met: the organization offers goods or services to people in the EU, or the organization monitors their online behaviour (Article 3.3 refers to more unusual scenarios, such as in EU embassies). Small- and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) with fewer than 250 employees are not exempt from the GDPR, but the regulation does free them from record-keeping obligations in most cases (see Article 30.5).

Complying with General Data Protection Regulation

Key things you will need to address on your website to be GDPR compliant:

- Every request for user data (including cookies) must be mandatory opt-in by stating consent / legitimate interest.
- Ensure there is a cookie opt-in pop-up form on the website linked to your updated privacy policy.
- Ensure that all your online forms have a strict opt-in policy – which must be categorized for specific areas of interest.
- Ensure that the user has a granular opt-in option to state how they wish to be contacted (phone/email/post/text/etc.) as well as the mailing list.
- Ensure the user is given a completely separate checkbox to say they are agreeing with your terms and conditions on all forms.
- Assume your online privacy policy document will need to be updated – and must list every named third-party tracking software separately.
- Ensure the website terms and conditions/privacy policy explicitly reflect the collection, transmission, and storage of any personal data.
- Ensure that all requests for any personal data explicitly state how the data will be used, how the data is stored, and for exactly how long.
- The user must be given simple and clear ways of changing the frequency or opting-out entirely of any marketing communication.
- Assume that all data in your organization that is currently stored will need to be made secure and will need fresh consent for any marketing.

The above has an impact on your website functionalities.

Website Functionalities Affected by GDPR

As a result of GDPR, the following website functionalities are mainly affected:

- **Online contact form:** To make your contact form GDPR compliant, you need to add to your contact form a tick box for users to confirm that they accept the terms of using your website and how they agree to be contacted. Your web forms must identify each party for which the consent is being granted.
- **Email marketing:** A key feature of the GDPR is to ensure that (would be) customers do not receive unsolicited emails. Therefore, you should only send out email marketing material to those individuals who have explicitly opted-in. Equally, it should be made easy for people to unsubscribe from a mailing (unsubscribe link must be obligatory provided at the bottom of the mailing). For all different types of processing of the customer's email (post, email, telephone, third party), the customer should be able to provide a separate consent.
- **Privacy policy:** A privacy policy is compulsory for any commercial website and should include key information about how the website uses the customer's data, relevant legislation, personal information that the website collects and why it is collected (site visitation tracking, contact forms, and email links), how personal information is stored, information about the website's server, third party data processors, data breach policy, data controller details, data protection officer, changes to your privacy policy.
- **Handling data:** Customers have a "right to be forgotten" so that they can have their details removed from a website and the database if they request it. You should, therefore, have a process in place that caters for this and also facilitate a way that users can request this, mentioning it clearly in the privacy policy or elsewhere on the website. To emphasize the security of customer data, you are required to keep all data secured in an encrypted environment. By adding an https protocol to your website, You are helping encrypt the data that customers fill out on your site. GDPR rules highlight that all data must be stored in the EU. It is important to identify and have in place contracts with your third-party data processors to be GDPR compliant. If this is not the case, then you should opt for another provider.
- **Online marketing:** If you are an e-commerce business, then you are likely to be using a payment gateway for financial transactions. Your website may be collecting

personal data before passing the details onto the payment gateway. If this is the case, and your website is storing these personal details after the information has been passed along, then you will need to modify your web processes to remove any personal information after a reasonable period, for example, 60 days. The GDPR legislation is not explicit about the number of days, it is your judgment as to what can be defended as reasonable and necessary.

- **Using Google Analytics:** Google Analytics allows you to understand how your (would be) customers are interacting with your website. You can find out how many people are on your website, which page they visit the most, how long they stay on each page, which page they visit next, on which page most visitors exit, etc. All such data can be used to help you understand your visitor better and know which pages you need to improve. Server analytics can also provide a lot of insight. Module 10 will provide more information on web analytics and performance management for digital channels for SMEs.

3.5.2 Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG2.0)

Digital accessibility is the ability of a website, mobile application, or electronic document to be easily navigated and understood by a wide range of users, including those users who have visual, auditory, motor, or cognitive disabilities. “The Business Case for Digital Accessibility” explores key advantages of web accessibility to businesses of all types. Developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI), it provides research and examples to inspire confidence among leaders and decision-makers that continued investment in accessibility is good for your business.

Making your commercial online channels available in an accessible manner is also reaching out to 15% of the population (WHO) that has a disability, and uses for example Assistive Technology to access a website, via desktop, laptop, or smartphone. If your website is accessible, they will have an advantage to those that are not, and will allow you to also reach out to customers with disabilities.

3.5.3 Secure Communication

As an SMTE, you will have to handle online business with your customers. And this may require handling of personal data, such as name, email, birthdates but also financial information such as credit card numbers, etc. Providing this information in a secure manner to you so that no one can “steal” this data while submitting it to you, will require a secure connection via your website. Thus, you will need a HTTPS (Hypertext transfer protocol secure) connection. There is a difference between HTTP and HTTPS. HTTP stands for Hypertext Transfer Protocol. When you enter http:// in your address bar in front of the domain, it tells the browser to connect over HTTP. HTTP sends data unsecured over port 80. It should therefore not be used to collect sensitive data from your customers, such as credit card details but also emails, personal data, etc. (see also the connection with GDPR). HTTPS on the other hand is secured and uses port 443 to send data. A HTTPS connection requires that you have a valid SSL certificate and it is signed by a CA (Certificate Authority). An SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) is a standard security technology for establishing an encrypted link between a server and a client, typically a web server (website), and a browser. When a website goes through the process of obtaining a certificate, the issuer of the certificate becomes the trusted third-party. Normally, such SSL service is provided by your hosting company. Data that is sent using HTTPS is protected via TLS (transport layer security protocol). TLS provides three important layers of protection:

- data integrity to ensure that the data cannot be modified or broken during transfer without detection,
- encryption of the data to keep it secure, and
- authentication to prove that users are communicating with the intended site.

When a browser recognizes a secure website, it will use the information on the certificate to verify that the website is exactly as it claims to be. More importantly, when a potential customer knows the difference between an HTTP and HTTPS website (and many do since most browsers will indicate that a website is safe or not to submit sensitive data), they can safely browse your website and will know that their information will be safe. Such level of security allows businesses to gain credibility.

Google also favours websites that are trusted, secure, and certified. Therefore, HTTPS has been a confirmed Google ranking factor since 2014 (https://webmasters.googleblog.com/2014/08/https-as-ranking-signal.html). Since July 2018 Google also explicitly uses HTTPS as a ranking signal. Switching to HTTPS will benefit any website, whether or not confidential information is involved. There are no reasons not to go for a HTTPS protected website. The cost is pretty low, sometimes even free. Check with your hosting provider for SSL options to compare, some even offer it for free such as One.com, SuperHosting.bg, etc. It's advised to also properly redirect your old HTTP pages to HTTPS using 301 permanent redirects so that they don't lose any ranking. If you use a popular CMS, there will be free plugins available to do this with just a few clicks.

Before starting make sure to:

- Turn off your Content Delivery Network (CDN) integration and disable the caching plugins.
- Ensure that all external services and scripts you use have an HTTPS version available.

You will as a result lose social share counts on all your posts and pages unless you use a plugin that supports share recovery. This is because your share counts are based on an Application Programming Interface (API) that was looking at the HTTP version, and you have no control over 3rd party social networks.

3.6 Increasing Website Traffic

In order to push traffic to your website you can use various online and offline strategies. Key is to mix those strategies that are the best suitable for your business and that have the best results. You can know this by testing the strategies below and see what the results are in your website metrics. We will distinguish 2 different traffic sources, online and offline.

3.6.1 Increasing Website Traffic Online

There are a number of methods and tools to increase the traffic to websites and the most used one are reviewed below.

Perform Keyword Research

This is your very first action to undertake when you want to position your website well in the search engine result pages (SERPS) of Google, Yahoo, Bing. You need to list the keywords that are important for your business and use these in a natural way throughout your website's content. We stress the fact to use it naturally since the search engine will consider your webpages as being spammy when they are filled with keywords. Write in a natural way and then optimize in such way that it does not hinder the natural reading flow of the visitors. To find relevant keywords you can use a free tool like https://keywordtool.io/ which will give you combinations using Google autocomplete. Via the paid version ($69 / month) you will also see the search volume in Google. Another site to use is https://moz.com/ which offers you keyword research. Pricing starts from $99 / month. When doing your keyword research, it is advised to also target long-tail keywords and not just the most popular ones. Long-tail keywords account for a majority of web searches, so you should really include them into your keyword strategy. The same goes for LSI (Latent Semantic Indexing) keywords. These are words and phrases related to your target keyword and are conceptually related terms that search engines use to deeply understand content on a webpage. You can use https://www.thesaurus.com/ in order to find synonyms.

Perform On-site Search Engine Optimisation

With on-site SEO you are optimizing elements on a website in order to rank higher in the search engines. To do on-site SEO you will be optimizing both the content and HTML source code of a page. It's imperative to only use white-hat SEO, which are tactics allowed by Google as any other so-called black-hat SEO might result in your references in Google and other search engines being taken down. The keywords should be used in:

- the content: use it throughout the text but in a natural way
- the meta description: short description of a page between 50 and 160 characters
- the meta title: describe the content of your page with a good key phrase, this can be the header but it can be different if your header is too long. We advise 50–60 characters maximum
- headers: you can choose to use a text for the header which is different to the title if your header is too long for instance
- the URL: use keywords inside the URL, e.g., www.hotel.be/cheap-hotel-rooms-in-brussels instead of www.hotel.be/id=12234
- alt text / title / filename of images: people often forget that images are also an easy way to attract visitors to a website (via Google Images for instance), use the correct keywords in the image name, alt text and title
- tags: set the main keywords as tags when you do a blogpost on your blog, it will create internal links to articles that have a similar subject, which Google will appreciate

Create Good and Helpful Content

If you want your site to rank well, it is primordial to have content that is closely linked to your business so that search engines can add sense to your web presence and connect it to search queries of their users. To give a very simple example, if you run a hotel business in Paris, your website should have content that talks about your hotel being in Paris and not be about visiting the Ramblas in Barcelona. Your content should also be created keeping in mind how people use search engines, which is increasingly by using questions, such as: where can I find a boutique hotel in Paris? You can easily check this by using the autocomplete in Google search for instance which will give you an idea what people ask. Your main pages should not overlap each other but should each address a certain aspect of your business and be focussed on using the most important keywords for your business. To address the other possible Google queries and also the long tail search queries, you should create articles for your website's blog. This will give you the chance to work on extra content for your website without interfering with the structure of your website.

The more unique content pages you have, the more pages Google will index and thus the more entry-points are created for users to find you in Google and related search engines. It is advised to post regularly, at least 8 articles per month is a minimum. Overtime you will see your traffic increase.

Examine Your Website's Analytics

Google Analytics is an excellent source to verify if you are actually scoring well on your selected keywords. By identify the landing pages on your site that have good clickthrough rates (CTR), but with a poor average position in search results, you can start working on getting these pages optimized more. The same goes for search queries (keywords) for which your site has good average positions, but poor click through rates. In that case these are the queries for which you should improve content so it can lead to more visitors, you can for instance use more attractive titles. In module 10 you get a complete oversight on how to use Google Analytics.

Use Attractive Photos

A picture is worth a thousand words. And that is also the case in online (and offline) marketing. You need visuals in almost every section of your website, also on your contact page where you can put forward a picture of your reception team so customers know who they are mailing to, chatting to, phoning with. It makes that the interaction also gets more familiar with a face. When using visuals make sure of the following:

- Do not copy visuals from elsewhere on the internet.
- Make the pictures yourself or have them made by someone in your team, a good smartphone can already do wonders.
- Ask a photographer to make a series of photos for you. Work with a contract that stipulates very well all the kind of uses you will make of the pictures.
- Take enough time to make good pictures, after all these photos offer the first impression to the web visitor.
- Keep your pictures up to date.
- Use pictures in your blog to show that you are working on improving the hotel, restaurant, etc.

- Do not include people in the pictures unless you have their explicit written approval.

Incorporate Video in Your Communication

Next to photos, you should also use videos on your website and on social media platforms you use. You can use these videos to offer an extra visual experience, give extra information or give people an instant idea what to expect from your home, restaurant or cafe. Apart from making your website more engaging you can also use videos to attract new visitors when used on platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, etc. In that case make sure you add links in the description of the videos. Creating videos for your business is not necessary a very expensive enterprise if you want to take some time to do it yourself. It suffices to have a good smartphone, use a microphone, a not so expensive video editing software and especially lots of creativity to get a good result. If that seems all too complicated, you can hire a professional team. You might want to consider to add subtitles since a lot of people don't have the sound on when watching videos online.

Include Frequently Asked Questions

A frequently asked questions (FAQS) list is a list of articles which act as answers to common recurring questions. The FAQS is because of this an important component of websites, either as a stand-alone page or as a website section with multiple subpages per question or topic (which in itself are also excellent for SEO). If you have a long list of FAQS it is advised to split them up in groups, for instance you could consider having the following segmentation (each section will then hold various sub topics related to the main topic):

- Your reservation
- Change or cancel reservations
- Payments
- Loyalty program
- How to create an account

It is advised to align your chatbot with these FAQS and even link to the individual answers from inside your chatbot. FAQS will reduce the workload of your customer service team as they lead the prospects directly to the right section.

Keep Active Social Media Pages

Social media can have a big impact on your business. In order to get good results, it is necessary to keep these platforms alive with new content. Here are some ideas how to keep your social media platforms alive:

- Post regular content across your social media platforms. This can be in the form of blogs, photos, videos, etc.
- Interact with followers by replying to them.
- Make use of the Facebook chatbot to give automatic answers to people who have questions.
- If you have a lot of local visitors to your business, then it is advised to every now and then run a locally promoted post.

Use Chatbots

Admins of active Facebook and/or Instagram pages will have noticed that communication via these platforms can be very time consuming, there are a lot of things that could be communicated during these chats like answering questions, promoting a special offer. In order to seriously reduce the human factor in responding to requests, there is the advised option to use a chatbot. A chatbot is a web application software used to conduct an on-line chat conversation via text on platforms like Facebook and Instagram (and other platforms) but also on your website. A chatbot will use automated conversations in order to direct the client to the choice he is looking for or can nudge him into the direction of a choice you want. A chatbot will generally do this in the first place:

- start the conversation with a welcome message when a chat window is opened on a website, asking what the user needs;

- will leave a message when a person has left a comment on a post on Facebook or Instagram, typically this is either a soft sales message or an invitation to start the conversation;
- will answer to questions asked in the messaging part of Facebook and Instagram.

The follow-up answers to the user's questions can be triggered by keywords that are recognized by the chatbot and which can easily be programmed via such platforms as Mobilemonkey.com which offers a very low pricing for starters. Although some argue that a chatbot should be acting like a human, it should actually be acting intuitive so that a user is easily led to the info he wants when he has started the conversation. If the conversation itself becomes too detailed, you can set the chatbot so that it will inform the user that he / she will be contacted by someone.

As such it is key to check on what your chatbot is doing and to actually reply to people who have a question which cannot be solved by a chatbot. Note that it can also easily be used to execute datamining on your users, for instance you can request emails, mobile numbers etc which are generally stored in the apps used so that the user only has to click one button instead of having to type the info himself.

Send Email Newsletters

Promoting content through email newsletters is an effective way to increase website traffic. Here are a few email marketing best practices:

- Include enticing information in the subject line of your newsletter.
- Add an attractive description in the first paragraph of the email or in the alt-text of the picture/logo that precedes your text so that that description is visible in the mailbox overview.
- Insert a link on all the pictures and add a link or button that subscribers can click to read more of the content.
- Make sure emails are mobile-friendly.
- Address your addressee personally and not as a group. Employ personalization by including the name of the subscriber.

- Make the email visually appealing with the use of well-designed templates but keep it simple, don't use photo backgrounds for instance.
- Conduct A/B testing to see which versions of emails receive more opens and clicks. Start with different subject lines as these are the first thing people see when checking their mailbox.
- Do not exaggerate the use of emojis in your subject line.

When will you benefit from using email marketing?

- To send deals and coupons
- To send service or product promotions
- To send meaningful, detailed content

Use Influencers

A lot of businesses have turned to influencers in order to boost their business. However, you should know that using influencers will only have a short effect and will often not end in a long-time business relationship as their followers hop from one action to the other. Use paid influencers when you have a special action you want to put in the spotlights and make sure to do your calculations first to see if it can make you money or not during the action period.

Send Informative Press Releases

Well-written informative press releases should be part of your communication strategy. You can announce company news or events and thus control what the topic of your news will be if picked up in the press. Make sure that your text answers the 5 Ws: Who, What, Why, When, Where.

Stick to facts and try to avoid as much as possible promo talk where you basically say nothing. If you want to add a more emotional element, then use a quote to do so. The reason for this is really simple, factual news is easier to edit than trying to make a promotional talk neutral. In the latter case you often will see that you have close to no facts left after editing. So, help the journalist and deliver him an almost ready to publish news piece.

There are different occasions to send out a press release for your business:

- New products or services that your business offers.
- A contest, which will get you extra leads.
- Company news such as a new owner, new staff member such as a winetaster, a business partnership.
- Recruitment news if your business suddenly looks for a lot of extra people.
- Crisis management. Good and clear communication can save your image or at least decrease the possible damage caused.
- Occasions or events.
- Expert insight in for instance the tourism domain, coffee making, …

When writing the press release make sure that the content and topic is accessible to a larger public. Make sure that the intro already summarizes what the press release is about and make sure not to repeat yourself in the press release itself. Each paragraph needs to offer new info. Add an own photograph and indicate that it is copyright free. If you use an external photographer, make sure that you have a written approval that the photo can be used for promotional purposes without paying extra. Add a quote from the key stakeholder in the business, or someone who is directly related to the story, so that the quote will be relevant. Add a crucial detail in that quote so that it can be picked up easier. Finally, add your website URL so that people can check your site for more info. As a result, do make sure that your press release is also added to the blog section of your website before you send out the press release.

Work on Link Building

The more links that point to your website with relevant keywords, the more Google will be trained to identify your page with these keywords. Easy? Not really. In order to get qualified links pointing to your website you have to work on 2 domains:

- **Organic link building:** this occurs when another site finds your content interesting enough to point back to your site. To do this you can write compelling blogposts that offer added value and send out a mail to all relevant blogs that you just posted this. With some luck a few blogs will also include an article on their website and point back to your original blog.

- **Paid link building:** there are a lot of services offering paid link services, however, these are often too expensive or very poor in quality. If you have a budget to go for paid link building, it is advised to spend time in contacting blogs and relevant websites with an offer to include an article pointing back to your website. Most will reply that they either don't do guest posts or they will ask some financial compensation. In that case offer them a flat fee for a permanent guest post. Make sure that the guest post is not tagged with guest post or sponsored post because Google will downgrade the article and link. A golden rule: never ever go for a backlink exchange as this will be punished by Google.

Retarget Web Visitors Using Web Push Notifications

Web push notifications is a whole new way of staying in touch with people who have visited your site. These are notifications that can be sent to a website visitor when he has opted in on a desktop or Android mobile device (anonymously). They come in the form of alert style messages that slide in on a desktop screen. Depending on the operating system the place where they appear will differ. On mobile Android device they come in a manner nearly identical to push notifications delivered from apps. The web push notifications are connected usually with the blog section of a site and work in sync with the scheduled time of your post going online. So, with each new blogpost you can thus passively inform followers that a new post has been added to your blog. Users do not need to be on any website or even be online to receive these push messages. The moment the push notification is sent it will appear on your screen. If you are offline, they will appear the moment you go back online. These messages are a very powerful way to connect your business with website visitors, even if they don't click through, they still will see your web push notification so it also acts as branding.

Recent statistics (https://www.moengage.com/learn/push-notifications-ctr-success-rate-and-metrics/) indicate that the current results are as following:

- Delivery rate (DR): 62,38%
- Click-through rate (CTR): 4,67%
- Conversion rate (CR): 22,27%

Depending on the topic of your business, and the topic of your respective posts, the CTR can be higher or lower. The more 'clickbait' the subject, the more CTR you will have. It's key to understand that you will need to build up your public for web push notifications to work. The more traffic your website has, the more signups you can expect, if you have a post that works really well, you will also see your number of followers increase.

There are a multitude of services available, however, there is only one service that is immediately accessible for each business, and that's Webpushr.com which offers excellent integrations with 3rd party platforms such as WordPress, WooCommerce, Zapier, etc. and it is free for up to 10000 active subscribers, which is already quite a lot. Just to give you an idea, if you have 10000 active subscribers and you can reach a CTR of 4,67%, you will get 467 visits to your website for each web push notification you send out. The Webpushr.com web push notifications also have no impact on the loading of your website, and they offer a completely transparent and easy-to-understand data protection & privacy policy with no current or prior affiliations/partnerships with advertising & data brokerage companies unlike other such services. The only downside is that it does not support multi-language to send notification separately.

Retarget Web Visitors Using Facebook and Google Ads

Both Facebook and Google offer retargeting or remarketing solutions. Unlike the retargeting using web push notifications, retargeting using Google or Facebook works via a cookie drop and does not require a specific action from the web visitor (although you should in theory only be followed if you agree to all the cookie settings on a website you have visited). Let's first look at how Facebook handles retargeting. At Facebook retargeting is a pay-per-click (PPC) strategy where you show your ads to people who are familiar with your brand and this because these people have either previously visited your website (where Facebook drops a cookie in your browser) or have interacted with your Facebook or Instagram page. In short, retargeting enables you to show your ads to people who already know about you. Its purpose is to try to get them to act (click, shop, etc.). To build up the audience to whom these retargeting ads will be offered to, you can populate this with visitors of your website (via a cookie drop) and/or you can also add a retargeting audience in Facebook by simply uploading

all the data you have on a customer so that Facebook can try and match this data with registered Facebook users. You can also exclude existing customers from a special remarketing campaign.

Important:

- If you want to target new costumers only, then exclude people who have already purchased something with you. Also use unique ads since these new customers already know your business from visiting your website or interacting with your Facebook and/or Instagram pages.
- If you want to target existing customers, use ads that focus on upsell and promotions to drive traffic and leads.
- Retargeting or remarketing does take time. First of all, you will need to build up your audience of you work on new customers. And secondly your campaign has to run for quite some time since your ad budget will be spent overtime (recommended) and not all of your audiences are online every day.
- When remarketing, make sure that the targeted audience sees your ad at least 4 times.

Google Remarketing works a bit differently than Facebook's. Since Google has no social media platform, it will focus its build-up of retargeting or remarketing audiences via a small snippet of code (remarketing code) that is placed on your website. When someone visits your website, this person will be added to a remarketing list. Then when they visit another website that uses the Google Ad network, they are served your ad. Google allows you to customize who sees your remarketed ads, you can for example prioritize new or returning customers.

Disadvantages:

- Unlike push notifications you pay per click since both Facebook and Google use PPC.
- Where web push notifications can be free up to 10000 followers, here you will pay from the very first click.
- It takes time to build up your audience.

- The capping (the number of times someone sees your ad) is interesting but also a possible negative side since you can annoy people too much with your ads.
- Since it happens 100% passively, people can get the impression they get followed.
- Once you stop paying, the traffic stops.
- You do not own the audience, Facebook and Google do, once you stop paying, your audience is gone, and in the case of Google it's completely gone after one year anyhow.
- While Facebook can offer you an instant audience via your Facebook followers or via data you upload, Google will need to build up its remarketing audience. If your website has not a lot of traffic, you will need to spend first on Google ads for instance to build up your audience, so you will end up paying twice. A good ROI follow-up will be needed in that case.
- Unlike web push notifications it's impossible to push your ad immediately to your complete collected audience.
- People who do not want to accept cookies cannot be included the remarketing audience. However, reality shows that this is a major problem with many sites which do not respect the choice of the web visitor and remarket everyone. GDPR is a real concern here.
- The PPC on Facebook and Google is not always the cheapest solution and depending on competitors targeting the same audience like you your PPC can differ a lot.
- If you only build your audience with non-paid web traffic you risk to fish in a limited pond.

Advantages:

- There is no limit to how many people you can remarket in Facebook and Google.
- The build-up of an audience is faster than with web push notifications since it happens passively.
- You can set your budget so that you don't overspend
- There is a very good way to check the ROI of your campaigns, especially via Google.

- Remarketing ads with retargeting campaigns cost much less to reach the same audience and can be highly cost effective compared with pay-per-click ads.

3.6.2 Increasing Website Traffic Offline

Besides the already existing conventional non-internet promotion channels like advertisements in print magazines and newspapers, there are also less costly ways to drive traffic to your website. Include your website URL in all of your print material: if you want to generate traffic from offline sources then you will first of all need to show where people can find you online and that should be first of all your own website. You can also use QR-codes in your print material to direct people to your website so that they don't have to type your URL. Add the URL of your website on cars, trucks etc. used by your business. Make promo material holding your url: bags, coffee mugs, stationary, etc. Use QR codes inside your brick-and-mortar business to drive traffic to your website for prices, menus, etc. The corona pandemic has made this a very accepted way of communication inside a physical business. These visitors can then be turned into future customers (web push notifications on Android and remarketing audiences for Facebook and Google).

Include exclusive online promotions in your offline sources: add a promotion in your printworks to direct people to your website and make sure that the code is unique so that you can later on follow the impact of your offline promo material.

Include your business cards in your promo campaign: use these personal interactions to drive qualified traffic to your website.

Use text messages to drive traffic to your website. Although not immediately offline, text messages are a very powerful tool to connect with your users to do upsells or offer promotions. The cost for a text message can be as low as 0,07 Euro per contact and the open rate is significant. You should text messages for the following reasons:

- Push deals and coupons.
- Personal alerts, e.g., notifications and account updates.

3.7 Summary

A website and other online platforms (social media accounts, booking systems, blogs, etc.) are very important marketing tools for tourism organizations in the global world. SMEs should have an online profile to appeal to their global customers. Hotel websites are advised to promote online consumers' flow experience through designing and delivering consumer-oriented web atmospherics to invoke customers attention (Gao and Bai, 2014). In addition to that, each organization should define their target group and design their websites based on their specialties, either in-house or through outsourcing. Their contents and potential services should be directed based on the target groups demands and needs.

After completing the website design, organizations should be aware of updating their website as it will increase their sphere of influence and also trigger Google to index the site better. Even if the website design process can be struggling for beginners, this module explains it comprehensively. Besides, web design service, providers are also available for those who want to take professional support.

Supplementary Resources

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWA-xbsJrVg
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K-zI7sC0glo
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AZ8GqW5iak
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3JluqTojuME

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Assessment Questions

1) What is a mobile version of my website?

a) a completely new CMS

b) an app

c) a basic html website

d) a website with responsive design

2) Which of the following is a strategic consideration while developing a website?

a) Deciding website developer

b) Choosing website construction tool

c) Deciding the digital media to advertise

d) Considering key website features

3) By using _____ I can increase the security of my website by

a) a firewall on my PC

b) a virus scanner

c) https

d) WordPress

4) The _____ is the website functionality that is mainly affected by GDPR.

a) Website address

b) Target Groups

c) Social Media

d) Privacy Policy

5) Institutional Logo and preferably a slogan have to be displayed on the home page:

a) True b) False

6) After creating your website, testing via a laptop guarantees its function on other devices:

(a) True b) **False**

7) Functionality, usability, security, and privacy are the main dimension of a quality website for tourism and hospitality businesses.

(a) True b) False

8) Which of the following is a core element of website design?

a) Website headers b) Footer c) Site map **d) All of them**

9) Please match the concepts with the correct definitions.

a) SEO	1) Regulation in EU law on data protection and privacy in the European Union and the European Economic Area.
b) Responsive design	2) Computer software used to manage the creation and modification of digital content.
c) GDPR	3) The layout and/or content responds or adapts based on the size of screen they are presented on.
d) CMS	4) Process of improving the quality and quantity of website traffic to a website or a web page from search engines.

a)a3, b4, c1, d2 b) **a4, b3, c1, d2** c) a1, b2, c4, d3 d) a4, b3, c2, d1

10) Please match the concepts with the correct definitions.

a) WCAG2.0	1) A web hosting provider is a type of Internet hosting service that allows individuals and organizations to make their website accessible via the World Wide Web.
b) HTTPS	2) It is your digital address that people will use to get connected to your website.
c) Web hosting provider	3) Secure communication over a computer network, widely used on the Internet.
d) Domain name	4) Series of web accessibility guidelines published by the Web Accessibility Initiative of the World Wide Web Consortium

a)a3, b4, c1, d2 **b) a4, b3, c1, d2** c) a1, b2, c4, d3 d) a4, b3, c2, d1

Module 4: Content Marketing for Small and Medium Sized Tourism Enterprises

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Learning Objectives

After reading this unit, the reader will be able to:

- explain content marketing and its role in the tourism and hospitality business;
- understand the importance and benefits of content marketing;
- know the steps for content marketing management
- list content formats and channels;
- remember best practices and common errors in content marketing.

4.0 Introduction

Nowadays, the internet is used to satisfy our material needs by making the exchange process simpler and easier. The internet has now become one of the most powerful channels for marketing in the world. By using different internet tools such as websites or social media, companies can increase their performance. Despite the increasing importance of digital marketing, SMTEs hardly benefit from it perhaps it is because of the belief that marketing on the internet is not so important for SMTEs. Therefore, SMTEs do not take the advantage of internet marketing (Martínez, 2014).

It is important that SMTEs have to find a way to remain in the business in the consolidated and competitive markets. Insufficient use of digital marketing tools is one of the main reasons why SMTEs fail. For this reason, adopting and using the digital marketing is of great importance. This module focuses on a new trend - known as content marketing on the internet– more specifically content marketing in the tourism and hospitality business. This module will give information about the definition, importance, and benefits of content marketing. It will also explain strategies and channels used for content marketing as well as basic principles of content optimisation and good content marketing practice.

4.1 The Definition and Purpose of Content Marketing

Marketing can be understood as a set of activities that explores, creates and gives value to satisfy the specific consumer's needs. Marketing of goods and services differs and they require bespoke marketing approach. The application of marketing tools depends on the businesses, their resources and innovations (Iturralde, 2015). In recent years, digital marketing has been emphasised because of technological advances and the common use of digital media. Consumers have changed the way they do buy or consume. The introduction of the new technologies has generated new marketing approach; hence it has affected the development of content marketing. Content marketing is about creating useful and interesting contents for consumers (consumer and business markets) to generate a positive reaction from them.

There is no a specific or universal definition of what content marketing is. However, Content Marketing Institute`s (2015) definition of content marketing is generally accepted: *"the marketing and business process for creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire, and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience - with the objective of driving profitable customer action.*" Content marketing consists of creating contents that stand out and transform the product and services so that consumers buy them, and websites and social networks are the main information and communication channel for the consumers to obtain such information about a company's offers (Núñez, 2015). Content marketing tries to keep the target group interested in offers which in turn consolidate consumer loyalty. The utmost objective of content marketing is to attract consumers to the brand or business and so that they buy and consume the products and services that the company offer. Consequently, it enables a company to increase their revenue which is the reason why they exist (Núñez, 2017). The number of brands using content marketing has increased considerably, because this strategy is more cost effective compared to other types of marketing. Content marketing can be cheaper than other types of marketing but it requires a multidisciplinary team that is able to optimise, share and change the contents for the target group (Núñez, 2017). Content marketing is what a company creates and shares with a target audience to communicate its story about the brand, product or service. Companies need to gain confidence of potential buyers regarding their services and products to penetrate into the market. In order to understand a company and its` products or services, consumer need to know what kind of company

they have to deal with and which values are tied in with them, and how employees of the company can meet the clients' needs (Denning, 2011, as cited in Baltes 2015).

Social media is particularly an attractive medium for all types of businesses for content marketing purposes since the medium have a considerable impact on society. Furthermore, anyone can access them irrespective of the economic and social status, ethnicity or gender. However, we have to consider that the main functions of social networks are entertainment and communication, so the marketing information transfer through social media has to be balanced (Iturralde, 2015). According to Iturralde (2015) one of the most important parts of content marketing is the amount of information that we diffuse on social medium during the implementation of content marketing on social media. It is critical to define the interests, characteristics, likings or preferences of the consumers (our target group) in order to decide what and how we communicate on social networking sites. Another key aspect that needs to be considered is the development of trends based on consumers' tendencies. Being trendy is a feature with a big number of followers on a company`s accounts or profiles, and it improves and increases the impact of tourism and hospitality businesses on social networks. Social media has been proven to have great success when it is implemented with content marketing. Natural content on different social networks would hike up the engagement with the target customers as well as achieve a great viral scale. Perhaps, this is the main reason why companies are making the change towards content marketing. Therefore, there is no question that the advantages of content marketing outweigh its drawbacks (Le, 2013). However, in order to use this new marketing approach, we have to be prudent because we have to consider that society constantly receives many different types of information on social networks and it can affect the marketing campaign negatively (Iturralde, 2015). Due to large amount of information consumers are constantly receiving and overexposure to content, distinguishing one brand from another brands or businesses is very important. It is important to highlight what key strengths the company have (price, quality…) and make the most out of them. The key strengths can be any difference from other brands, businesses or competitors (Núñez, 2017). Iturralde (2015) suggests that we have to decide meticulously how we are going to implement the content marketing, how we are going to communicate to the target group or how are we going to attract the consumer to our products and services.

Many companies particularly tourism and hospitality businesses are interested using content marketing tools as well as make use of opportunities that are brought by digital marketing. Today, not only large tourism and hospitality businesses but also small and medium-sized companies have tendency to use content marketing.

4.2 The Importance and Benefits of Content Marketing

According to the statistics given by the Content Marketing Institute, the relevance and importance of content marketing is increasing. B2B marketers are establishing more content than they did one year ago. Behind every brand, there is a wealth of significant and valuable content that really connects a company with target audience. Content marketing can be profitable and it can lead to the growth of the position of the brand/company or can make the company more popular. The motivation behind content marketing is to inform and educate the clients which then leads to brand's recognition (Content Marketing Institute, 2015, as cited in Baltes, 2015). According to Lieb (2012), the main reason for using content marketing is to catch the attention of consumers. Consumers will see messages or contents about a product or service that will help them to satisfy their needs. Thus, they will feel attached to the brand or business. Five reasons why businesses and companies are making the change towards content marketing is suggested (Pulizzi and Barrett, 2009, as cited in Le, 2013):

1. Digital content media tools can give more advantages to buyers and can provide better data to companies than traditional media.
2. There is a great shift in buyer attitudes towards the credibility of content. Customers seek content which makes them more knowledgeable.
3. Regarding relationships, content marketing offers the opportunity of conversations and engagements between customers and businesses.
4. Because technology is simpler and cheaper to use, small companies can even give content solutions to customers.
5. The company or business should be skilled in their field. Thus, they should contain the most valuable and real content resource.

There are numerous reasons why content marketing should be part of digital marketing on the internet. Main benefits of content marketing for businesses as indicated in the literature are summarised below (Baltes, 2015; Bizzuka, 2013 cited in Le, 2013; Hahn, 2013 cited in Le, 2013; Lieb, 2012 cited in Quishpe, 2017; Núñez, 2017).

- Well-written content leads to enhance trust between the company and the businesses.
- If a business does not create content, nobody will find it and search engines too. Thus, the company cannot be found by the customers.
- High quality content will be shared which is synonymous with the content marketing success. Going viral is what every business should aim for.
- Relevant content helps to increase brand awareness of a company. The company may be in the consideration set of consumer`s future purchase.
- It gives more control over a business's messages. It is an ideal way to publicise goods and services at low cost.
- Quality content builds value, credibility, customer satisfaction and loyalty.
- New audiences and consumers can be attracted because the brand can be known by more people. It attracts new potential customers and make the business or brand known.
- It enables evaluation of brands or business before consuming products or services.
- Good content will increase the interaction between the business and consumers and increase e-word of mouth.
- Companies can know more about our public or community through content marketing, and make a better selection of the target group.

One study evaluated the benefits of social media content as well as the problems or types of content which led consumers to quit brands. The main findings of the research were summarised below (Gümüş, 2017).

- Most of the participants use Instagram to follow brands. The reason may be due to the visual content of Instagram. As a result, it is advised that brands

increase their visibility on visually appealing social media channels such as Instagram.

- Sharing distinct products, brands, or interesting and funny content instead of sharing content of their products leads the company to lose followers. Instead, brands are recommended to share content related to production processes, the usage of products, etc.
- If brands or companies want the followers to share brand content on their profiles, these companies should propose various benefits, and never forget important days or celebrations. Making content tied with the brand in important days surely makes easier for followers to share the content.
- If brands constantly update their pages and share recommendations or suggestions based on the characteristics of the target audience, this will undoubtedly satisfy followers more and more, even leading them to share on their profiles.

In sum, content marketing may create awareness and popularity for businesses and produce traffic to their online presence. But businesses should not consider content marketing as better than other marketing or promotion activities (Hahn, 2013). According to Hahn (2013), content marketing should be integrated into the established marketing practices. Tourism and hospitality businesses should be aware of the importance and benefits of content marketing because of its usefulness in terms of attracting potential customers, increasing brand awareness, making company more popular or even raising the company's status, and developing customer loyalty.

4.3 Steps in Content Marketing Management

The essence of the content strategy is the belief that if the company gives consistent and valuable information to consumers, they will reward the company with purchase and loyalty (Content Marketing Institute 2015; Baltes, 2015). The valuable and consistent information would increase consumer trust in the company. By creating valuable content, the company can attract the interest of customer that turns into lasting relationships (Cohen and Vuelo, 2015 as cited in Baltes, 2015). In order to be successful in content marketing, businesses should 'present the right content to the users at the time they need it in an engaging manner, across all channels they visit'

(Bly, 2018, p.89). Main steps for creating consistent and quality content include: 1) Setting content marketing goals and objectives; 2) Defining the target audience; 3) Determining content topics; 4) Determining digital content channels; 5) Creating quality content; and 6) Optimising content 7) Measuring and evaluating results.

4.3.1 Setting Content Marketing Goals and Objectives

Content marketing goals and objectives must be part of a well-defined and established content strategy, containing useful and usable content. Rose and Pullizzi (2011) suggest the following goals and objectives for a content marketing strategy (Rose and Pullizzi, 2011 cited in Vinerean 2017):

- Customer service (assistance given by a company to those clients who use or buy its services and products).
- Brand knowledge or reinforcement (knowledge of the brand or service).
- Customer conversion (progress towards clients being paying customers).
- Customer upsell (refers to a sales technique used so that a customer spends more by using or buying a premium or an upgraded version of what's being bought).
- Passionate subscribers (catch as many customers as possible).
- Lead conversion and potential customers (catch as many potential customers as possible).

One of the main goals of content marketing is to achieve trust among the targeted customers. Trust has been identified as one of the main drivers for content marketing success. Peppers and Rogers (2011) put forward four factors for a content marketing strategy to establish trust with the brand or company (Peppers and Rogers, 2011, as cited in Vinerean, 2017):

1. Communication quality (listening opinions, concerns or ideas and caring).
2. Shared values with clients (try to share a story and values in a way customers can make connection with).
3. Non-opportunistic behaviour (consumers can mistrust if they feel the content is taking advantage of a specific situation).

4. Interdependence (consumers depend on our products or services, but we depend on their needs; we have to care about the relationship and communication).

Content marketing has become the main and preferred online marketing strategy for numerous businesses particularly hospitality and tourism businesses. Companies can post and share product information and brand stories on different online platforms to accomplish business goals such as customer acquisition or retention, customer conversion, increased sales, brand visibility and value (Vinerean, 2017).

4.3.2 Defining the Target Audience

The next step for content marketing is to determine who the target customers are. It is critical to detect, recognize and define the target group`s needs (their needs, wants, problems, what they like and what they do not, their geography, their age, interests, etc.) and then offering services or contents that meet their specific needs. Scott (2011) suggests that marketers and publishers need to carefully recognize, detect and define their target audiences and then take into account the type of content which would fulfil their needs (Scott, 2011 cited in Vinerean 2017). One practical approach to identify and understand target customers is to ask five questions and get satisfactory answers to these questions (Quishpe, 2017). The questions are reviewed below (Quishpe, 2017).

Q1. Who are them?

This question refers to people that we want to attract to sell our product or service. They are the potential consumers or the target group that we want to build exchange relationship. For this reason, we need to know who they are and what they want to adapt our contents to their wants, needs, problems and interests.

Q2. What contents are they looking for?

In the second question, we have to think about what content our target group wants? Such questioning will indicate what type of content we must create: videos, newsletter, information graphic etc.

Q3. Where are they looking for the content?

The main search engine used for content is Google, and through it they must find our content: a video from YouTube, an information graphics from Pinterest. The best is to have different contents in different and adequate channels.

Q4. Why are they looking for this content?

Answering this question is necessary and very important to know what information or content the consumer is searching for and to know what needs they have. It is possible that they may search for the content by curiosity or perhaps to find answers. The search information can be used to give them the information they need.

Q5. When are they looking for this content?

To improve marketing strategy, the periods or moments when consumer search for the information or content related to our brand or business is important. For example, if there is a hospitality and tourism business located near a beach, the content about it should be shared when spring ends because people will look for what to do for summer at that time.

4.3.3 Determining Content Topics

One of the main concerns of content strategy is to catch the attention of target public. When a brand or company uses concrete stories or words which resonate with a client, they can dig greatly into who they are as consumers. This is the main reason why companies have to create powerful and strong brands in order to win customer's trust and admiration. By the creation of valuable and significant content, companies build such a big interest among the audience that leads to lasting relationships (Cohen, 2015 cited in Baltes, 2015). The main aim of information provided in the content is not to spring the virtues of the services and products of the marketer, but to provide

information to the clients, occasionally involving the marketer's services and products (Baltes, 2015). The most effective contents were categorised into three dimensions (Binh, 2013 cited in Le, 2013):

Branded content: contents which are important to the industry or company.

Random content: it can be anything, for instance, interesting or shocking news.

Contents that clients want to hear: Contents that solve problems.

Contents should be relevant, absorbing, educational as well as they are helpful for customers to solve their problems. If one of these three features are missed, the brand or service will not be converted into purchases (Binh, 2013 cited in Le, 2013). Tourism and hospitality businesses can make a list of topics that may meet the needs of travellers or solve their particular problems. The following topics can be covered in the contents in the context of travel and tourism (Michail, 2018):

- Local attractions and events that are authentic
- Local guides and attractions
- Photos and videos of attractions, destinations
- Wine tasting
- Local food
- Local hotels and restaurants
- Tips for travellers
- Local legends and history
- Local transportation
- Local events and news
- Things to do
- Frequently asked questions
- Weather
- Visa requirements
- Currency

4.3.4 Determining Digital Content Format and Channels

Most content on the internet or applications are presented as text, images, videos or audio formats. Below are some of the best practices for most used formats: text, images, videos (Neher, 2019, p.59-60).

Text:

- Shorter is better.
- Get to the point quickly
- Organise content with headers, bullets, emojis, etc.
- Aim for a single communication method.
- If you want something, ask for it explicitly.
- Eliminate extra detail.
- Establish a clear value proposition.
- Draw people in with a compelling headline.
- Think in terms of the audience-What is in it for them?
- Resist the urge to always explain everything.
- Consider short and fun-let people read between the lines.

Images:

- Clear and clean visuals.
- Use white-space.
- Limit text in a visual.
- Clear single focus point.
- Consistent with your brand.
- Use brand assets (colours, logo, design elements) strategically.
- Don’t over-brand content with logos and design elements.
- Visually stunning that draws people in.
- Contextually relevant.
- Real photos can work well.
- Avoid overly fake looking stock photos.
- Make the picture worth a thousand words.

Videos:

- Have a clear and compelling storyline.
- Grab attention immediately
- Brand or business present in context.
- Flexible format- horizontal for YouTube, vertical for Facebook and Instagram.
- Branding present from the beginning (ideally in context and not just a logo)
- Fast-paced.
- High action-lots of cuts and movements.
- Check sound-it should work with or without sound when possible.
- Lighting matters.
- Consider the design look and feel of the video.
- Start strong-capture attention immediately.
- Show the payoff or the big idea first.

The fundamental and primary medium of communication in digital marketing is the internet. Businesses are able to deliver marketing messages in a friendly, fast and effective way on the internet. Marketers' interest over the internet comes from its personal and technical interaction and multimedia capability, which leads to a growth in the number of users. Furthermore, it facilitates the contact with a selected and specific group of people who share similar interests (Świeczak, 2012). Tourism and hospitality businesses should publish and deliver contents on various online channels that are used by target customers. Online content delivery channels for most businesses may include the following (Deiss and Henneberry, 2017; Iredale et al. 2017):

- Company website.
- Company blog posts (top 10 lists, best product guide, how-to-guides, case studies, award updates).
- Social media networks (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, YouTube).
- Digital magazines and books
- Online newsletter
- Guest blogging (opinion posts hosted on a website external to company websites)

- Press releases.
- E-mail campaigns
- Affiliated websites
- Webinars

4.3.5 Creating Quality Content

Going viral is one of, or even the most important goal of content marketing, and it is something that tourism and hospitality companies should take it into consideration. The more viral contents are, the higher the consumption and purchases may be (Le, 2013). The driving factors making an online content viral were investigated by various authors (e.g., Berger and Milkman, 2012; Bowles, 2012 as cited in Le 2013). The most important content factors include following features: interesting, surprising, positive, intense and actionable.

- **Interesting:** The main question is not what makes a brand or service interesting, but how marketers can make it interesting.
- **Surprising**: The fact of finding a particular connection between apparently disconnected ideas is the key to spot the surprise factor.
- **Actionable**: The content provided should be useful to solve the target audience's problems. It should also explain how the audience can use that information in their situations.
- **Intense and positive**: Viral contents raise emotion from its customers. The intensity of that particular content is a key factor for being viral.

In order to make content more emotional, some practical guidelines were suggested and they are reviewed below (Berger and Milkman, 2012; Bowles, 2012 as cited in Le 2013):

- Change ideas into stories, which tend to be more emotion-provoking.
- Use of humour: Information can be told in a surprising way.
- Use of active voice rather than passive: Active sentences are more attractive.

- Suspense: Make the target audience come back in order to search for new pieces of information to solve the mystery resulted from the former contents.
- Be awe-inspiring: Provide the target audience with content which can awe emotion, it is what immediately leads them to share the content.
- Be cute: Being cute is directly associated with positivity.

In addition to these principles, content marketing specialists further point out some key areas to be taken into account in creating a content marketing strategy (Baltes, 2015):

- Put a focus first on quality rather than on volume.
- Consider using a variety of media (audio content, webinars, infographics, videos, pictures and even live events), besides written content like blog posts, for instance.
- Try to attract people who comment and share.
- Focus on topics clients care about. These topics should be of interest to the target audience.
- Encourage company's employees to share. It is relevant that the employees share the content marketing.
- Create a social foundation. Content is the main concern keeping the social media "engine" active, as people are constantly sharing and re-sharing content that they have found out or that someone else (in some cases) share with them.

Neher (2019, p.45) offers the following useful checklist for creating great content:

- My content has a clear value proposition.
- My message is short, direct and to the point.
- My message is structured for scanning.
- My message is real and authentic.
- My content is interesting.
- My message has a clear next step or call to action.
- My call to action can be complemented in as few steps as possible.
- I am using visuals that illustrate my message.

- I have considered using video.
- I am using copy that is catchy.

4.3.6 Optimising Content

As it has been discussed before, the more viral a good content is, the higher the sales or the purchases will be. To be able to achieve going viral, the tourism and hospitality businesses have to make their brand more popular. In this regard, search engines play a crucial role, as they improve the visibility of a company its` product or services. Tourism and hospitality businesses are not only optimising texts, but also, they should optimise images, and videos of their offerings.

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

It is clear that if the content has become viral, the sales of a company will be higher. It is relevant and profitable for tourism and hospitality businesses to increase their recognition and visibility where search engines play an important role. To do so, we need to optimise the content and take the strategy of search engine optimisation into consideration, which will help a company to reach a larger audience. Khraim (2015) defines search engine optimization as the procedure of writing, designing and coding a website to improve the visibility and quality of a business website for people using the search engines. Visibility of a company can be achieved by taking the highest ranking position on search engine results page (Gandour and Regolini, 2011 cited in Khraim, 2015). A website's final aim should be a better ranking by different search engines as well as to rank higher on the results page. In this book one module is devoted to search engine optimisation principles and techniques. In order to optimize the content, it is necessary to pay attention to the following points.

Optimising Text

Most of websites' content is represented in HTML format. However, if we use a CMS like WordPress, we are using a visual text editor, which is much simpler than a text processor like Word (Martín, 2018). With the help of this tool, we will be able to provide our text more emphasis through the bold, underline, italics functions etc.

Nevertheless, we also need to consider the structure of our content to make it easy for search engines to find, direct and clear for potential customers. Below are the potentially useful tools that we can use for hospitality and tourism businesses.

Visual Editors

As it is mentioned before, they are simpler than a text processor, so they do not offer, for instance, the possibility of changing the size of the fonts. There are templates that determine the size and font of the text depending on the section, like the header or the body of the website. This makes it easier and homogenic.

Headers

Headers are vital in content. They provide organisation and sort the text out based on relevance. In the interface of visual editors like WordPress, the user can decide what type of header he-she wants by choosing it from a drop-down menu.

Search engines recognise how good a heading is and reward websites that are well organised at the hierarchical level. Furthermore, the key words also need to be in order to make it easier for the customers to find the website (Martín, 2018).

Uniform Resource Locators (URLs)

This is what gives access to the content on the internet. When we search for something, for example, on Google, thousands and millions of URLs will appear. We could even say that the internet is mainly ruled by URLs. They link our various contents within our website and could also give access to the websites of influencers or companies that are collaborating with us. We can add them to our social media to let our followers to access our content. The simpler and the friendlier the URL is, the better for us and obviously for customer. If the content has key words in it, this will increase its relevance and memorability (Martín, 2018). URLs are the link to our content; thus, companies should consider thinking of a unique URL from the beginning so that they never modify. It would be inconvenient to alter the URL since the previous links would stop working.

SEO Tools on Page

It is highly recommended to use tools that will help SEO settings since not everything that we have mentioned and will mention are included in CMSs, or at least most of them are not (Martín, 2018). For instance, if we mention WordPress, and consider using it, we must bear in mind that we won't have a specific section for the meta description, of which we will speak later on. However, there are external tools that will allow us to do what CMSs can't, such as *Yoast SEO* (Martín, 2018).

SEO Title

Visual editors like WordPress will set the header as the title by default, but with Yoast SEO, we will be able to create a SEO title, which will appear on search engine like Google. It is convenient to create a SEO title that catches the attention of the audience and an attractive to read and see header for our content. We could repeat the title, but it is not the most convenient thing to do (Martín, 2018).

Description

It is also known as 'meta description'. This description will appear right below the URL. We need to create our own description or Google will use the first 156 characters that it can find from our website. When this happens, the description ends with suspension dots (Martín, 2018). In order to write a good description, hospitality and tourism businesses should try to:

- Not go over 156 characters.
- Add keywords.
- Be as clear and appealing as possible.
- Not copy or repeat the same meta description in different websites.

Optimising Images

Images are essential when it comes to creating a website. They evidently make the content more visual and attractive. Every website should have, at least, images. Images are also positioned by algorithms, as we can see in the 'Images' section on Google.

Weight and Dimensions

First, we need to clarify what weight and dimensions are. Weight refers to the room that an image occupies on the disk and the dimension refers to the width and height of the image. We need to take into consideration the weight of the images, since it is the most important factor (although width is relevant too). It is important to note that the more compressed the image is, the faster the website will load and less data will be needed for this purpose. In addition, this is well deemed by search engines, which will increase our possibilities to occupy a higher position in the indexes. It is convenient to keep the image under 100Kb. Width is a relevant matter too. The resolution of an image is measured in pixels. First, we indicate the width and then the height, adding an 'x' before it like 800x600px (800 pixels of width and 600 pixels of height).

4.3.7 Measuring and Evaluating Results

Measuring the productivity and results of our contents is not easy but it is very important. We can either measure the productivity of the business by quantitative way (the number of likes, followers etc.) or qualitative way by monitoring mentions, comments etc. According to Barker et al. (2015) measurement should be done by applying the following steps:

1. Defining qualitative and quantitative objectives: we have to select the expected results, objectives, the number of people to be reached, and time limit to obtain these results.

2. Identifying key performance indicators (KPIs): An example of KPI might be the number of comments or re-tweets from a post to measure the target group interest for a product or service that the company offer.

3. Establishing a beginning point to compare results: Having a point of departure of our KPI is important to compare and measure results later. We have to identify goals and prioritise what is significant (increasing our followers in 1000 persons can be important in a week but not in a year). Furthermore, benchmarking our results against competitors can be quite useful and important.

4. We have to compare our KPIs with the initial period to evaluate the progress: Registering measures constantly, for example once a week, is important to make conclusions why in a week the followers increase more than in other weeks (it can be due to an increase in the comments post).

Figure 1: Net Promoter Score Calculation

Source: TLF Research (2021)

There is many software or tools that allow us to measure the feelings or opinions of our consumers. An example can be Net Promoter Score (NPS) that is a measure used to know customer satisfaction and loyalty. Barker et al. (2015) explain that NPS is measured by dividing consumers in three types: promoters, passives and opposites. By asking customer how likely they are willing to recommend our brand-products or services on an 11 point Likert scale. Based on the answers provided by customer can be classified as follow (see Figure 1):

- Consumers rated on a mark between 9 and 10 are called as promoters. They are loyal consumers that will buy, recommend and benefit the brand or will allow a growth to the business.
- Consumers rated on a mark between 7 and 8 are called as passives. They are satisfied consumers but vulnerable to competitive offers.
- Consumers rated on a mark between 0 and 6 are called as opposites. They are unsatisfied consumers who probably will damage the brand or business and will affect the growth with their unfavourable opinions.

Barker et al. (2015), further suggest further measure like referring to consumers' interactions with our content. This measure can be the number of visits in a website, the number of followers, the comments in our websites or posts, shares or re-tweets. Measures or KPIs can be used by tourism and hospitality businesses can be as follow:

Blogs:

- Increasing by 30% - 40% of the number of visits in six months.
- Increasing by 20% the number of comments in the posts in six months.
- Increasing by 10% the number of followers in our social networks in six months.

Twitter:

- Increasing by 30% the number of tweets forward in thirty days.
- Increasing by 20% the number of followers in thirty days.
- Increasing by 15% the number of visits in our website from tweets links in thirty days.

Facebook:

- Increasing by 30% the number of comments in five months.
- Increasing by 30% the number of visits on our website from announcement Facebook links in three months.
- Increasing by 20% the number of fans in five months.
- Increasing by 20% the number of comments and likes in our publications or announcements in six months.

YouTube:

- Increasing by 30% the number of viewers in four months.
- Increasing by 10% the number of subscribers in four months.

Evaluation consists of interpreting the KPI results to understand and examine them. It is not enough to measure the impact of our activity in social networks sites, we have to analyse and interpret the results to know if the strategies put forward are aligning with the results and previously defined objectives (Barker et al., 2015).

4.4 Common Errors in Content Marketing

There are some common mistakes that can occur when using content marketing. These errors are very likely to occur because content marketing tools vary, revealing errors. Examples of common mistakes that can be faced while conducting content marketing include the following (Núñez, 2017):

- Confusing the content with the sales channel. We must use the content to promote our products and turn people into consumers, but we have to divide the content channel with the sales channel (the latter have to be out of the content).
- Limiting the content used when we can find a lot of contents that can fit in our trade or business.
- Promoting the content only at the beginning. We have to revise and continue with the strategy; it should not be done for once.
- Creating and promoting the contents without calculating the efficacy. Revising the efficacy is necessary to adapt our contents for consumers.
- Writing the content in a different language. We have to transmit the message in the same language of our target group.
- Generating the same content for different channels. We have to adapt the content depending on the channel used. Each channel works differently.
- Copying the strategies of other trades or businesses. We have to create our own strategies and design our own contents, since what works in other businesses does not have to work in the same way.
- Publishing the same content time and time again. The public will get bored because of seeing repetitive content.

4.5 Content Management Software

There are many things that needs to be considered while conducting content marketing. First, we have to think about what customer values or benefits we have and we can offer as a business. Second, we have to take into account what software or hardware we are going to use in order to gather and sort out the information that we collect (i.e. CM technology and infrastructure). Last, it is critical to have experienced people to create, develop and deliver efficient content for our services or products. All

of these issues are important and have to be taken into consideration to achieve successful content marketing (Boiko, 2002).

In order to create and deliver contents businesses need content management systems (CMS). Content management (CM) is 'the process for collection, delivery, retrieval, governance and overall management of information in any format. The term is typically used in reference to administration of the digital content lifecycle, from creation to permanent storage or deletion. The content involved may be images, video, audio and multimedia as well as text' (Kiwak, 2022). A content management system is software that enables us to get some level of automation when we want to efficiently manage content. It is usually server-based and a multi-user software that interacts with content stored in a repository (Barker, 2016). By using CMS, content creators or marketing professionals can create new content (or edit existing content), make changes and make it available to the public.

Type of Content Management Systems

Barker (2016) suggests four significant CMSs for web content management:

1. **Web Content Management (WCM):** This system of content management is primarily intended for content delivery in mass through websites. It is useful for separating content from presentation and publishing on multiple channels.

2. **Enterprise Content Management (ECM):** This is the method used to organise content at a more general level. It was traditionally known as document management. ECM is fairly convenient when it comes to collaboration, access control and file management.

3. **Digital Asset Management (DAM):** By using this method we can manage and manipulate rich digital formats such as images, audio, and video to take advantage of them and use them in other media. DAM is great for metadata and rendering.

4. **Records Management (RM):** It is used in the administration of transactional information and other records, created as a result of business operations, such as sales records, access records, contracts. RM comes in handy with retention and access control.

There are some slight differences among these systems, meaning that we can use one or another for the same purposes. A DAM system is frequently used to provide content for a website through integration with a WCM. Some ECM systems can also publish content or information on websites through systems that they possess (Barker, 2016).

There are more systems that hardly differ from each other. These are (Barker, 2016):

1. **Component Content Management Systems (CCMSs):** Used for the management of fine-grained content, like paragraphs, sentences and individual words. It is often used to assemble documentation or highly technical content.

2. **Learning Management Systems (LMSs):** This system is used to sort out content of learning resources for students and their interaction. We can see it on the virtual spaces or campuses that universities and colleges have, on which they publish the content that students need.

3. **Portals:** Used for management, presentation, and aggregation of multiple streams of information into a unified system.

As you can see above, the lines here are also very blurry, since one could say that CCMSs, LMSs, and portals are very similar methods of CM. Only LMS has unique characteristics. For instance, many WCM systems have add-ons and extensions that claim to be able to become an LMS (Barker, 2016).

While choosing a CMS software we need to take into account the following factors (Barker, 2016):

- The market that the software serves and competes in.
- The cases and examples that the user community creates and promotes.
- The specific features and type of contents designed to meet the needs of users.

What a CMS does?

As mentioned before, a CMS allows us to have control over our content. A CMS keeps track of content, and also "knows" where it is, what condition it is in, who can access it, and how it relates to other content. Furthermore, it seeks to prevent bad things from happening to our content (Barker, 2016).

More specifically, the controlling functions that a CMS provides us are (Barker, 2016):

- **Permissions:** This function let us know who can see the content, who can change it and who can delete it.
- **State Management and Workflow:** This function enables us to check if the content is or has been published, if it is a draft or if it has been removed or archived to prevent the public from seeing it.
- **Versioning:** It allows us to look at how many times a content has been changed, what it looked like months ago, how the most recent version differs from the previous one, and to restore or republish an older version.
- **Dependency Management:** Through this function, we can observe what content is being used, what would happen to a given content if other content was deleted, and what content is not being used at all.
- **Search and Organisation:** This function comes in handy when we want to find a specific piece of content regarding a given matter or content and how to group it and relate it to make it easier to manage.

All these functions allow our company or brand to increase the control that we have over our content and reduce risk of failing at doing it precisely, efficiently and in an organised way. A CMS also permits us to reuse the content. Content can be used more than once and in/on several places and in different ways to increase its value. Let`s see some more examples (Barker, 2016):

- News article can appear on a page of a website of a given magazine or journal, but it can also appear as a tease on the main page or on sidebars as ads.

- The biography of an author always appears at the bottom of every text written by him or her.
- A privacy statement or rights statement always appears at the bottom of every website.

In this situation, we use the same content that we once created instead of creating new content over and over again. This appears more consolidated and coherent to the clients (Barker, 2016).

Figure 2: Major Content Management Systems

Source: ETHINOS (2022)

A CMS also allows automating content. Since it is kept in one server, we can find whatever we need as it controls all of the content. Furthermore, if the structure of the content is well-built, it will be an easy task to display it in different formats, or publish it on different locations and perhaps re-arrange it on the fly to fulfil the needs of potential customers (Barker, 2016). A CMS can provide the following (Barker, 2016):

- We can provide clients with different formats of the same content.
- We can automatically create content aggregations for our website.
- We can create multiple versions of the same content in different languages to ensure that we can reach an many target groups as possible.
- We can manipulate the content we display in real time based on the behaviour of our audience.

This type of system is capable of doing all this by storing, structuring, examining and providing facilities content-wise and enables easy access when we want to find information about the content.

In addition, a CMS can also increase editorial efficiency by controlling what type of content the editor can add, what formatting tools are available for use, how their content is structured in the editing interface, how the editorial workflow and collaboration are managed, what happens to the content after being published, and publish a bigger mass of content in a shorter time frame (Barker, 2016).

CMSs are obviously not perfect, but they are a great option when the alternative is doing all this mentioned above manually.

What a CMS does not do?

It is true that a CMS is capable of many things, but it cannot do all the work for us. A CMS *only* manages content. It does not have the capacity to create the content for us. It will not publish posts on our Facebook or Instagram pages for us, it will not write articles for our websites or blogs. A CMS is software or a "virtual machine" that assists the process of marketing and promotion, and as a machine, it needs commands. Therefore, our content creation plan needs to exist apart from our CMS (Barker, 2016).

Unfortunately, CMS will not create marketing plan either. As Barker (2016, p. 40) stated:

> *"A CMS doesn't 'know' anything about marketing. While some systems have marketing tools built into them, they still depend on human beings for direction. Effective marketing is a uniquely human practice involving a combination of aesthetics, sociology, psychology, experience, and intuition."*

A CMS will undoubtedly aid us in the execution and organization of our marketing, but it must be designed, analysed, and reviewed by humans. It is not creative and does not understand the ideas that a team can come up with for their brand or company, or how they want to meet the needs of the public. It does not give access to other users or permits other users to edit or interact with content unless we set the CMS to do so.

4.6 Conclusion

This module has defined the meaning and benefits of content marketing for tourism and hospitality businesses. It has also reviewed the steps in creating great content online. These steps included setting content marketing goals and objectives; defining the target audience; determining content topics; determining digital content channels; creating quality content; optimising content and measuring and evaluating the results. It has also pointed out common errors made in content marketing, and reviewed the most used content management software.

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Evaluation Questions

1) Which of the following defines content marketing?

a) Content marketing is about creating useful and interesting contents for consumers to generate a positive reaction from them.

b) Content marketing is a process for creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire, and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience.

c) Content marketing is about informing and educating the clients which then leads to brand's recognition.

d) **All**

2) Which of the following is a benefit of content marketing for a business?

a) Content marketing leads to enhance trust between the company and the businesses.

b) Content marketing helps to increase brand awareness of a company

c) Content marketing attracts potential customers

d**) All**

3) Which of the following is not one of the steps for content marketing management?

a) Determining competitive advantage

a) Setting content marketing goals and objectives

c) Defining the target audience

d) Determining content topics

4) Which of the following topics should not be covered in the contents marketing of tourism and hospitality businesses?

a) Destination attractions

b) Local cuisines

c) Space discoveries

d) Local events

5) Which of the following should be a feature of content created in content marketing?

a) Interesting

b) Surprising

c) Actionable

d) All

6) Which of the following is a type of content format?
a) Text
b) Video
c) Image
d) All

7) Which of the following is a not channel for content marketing?
a) Blogs
b) Video
c) Website
d) YouTube

8) Content marketing is a form of paid communication and it is the same as digital marketing.

a) True **b) False**

9) While determining the target audience for content marketing, What is the right order of the following questions that should be asked?

a) What contents are they looking for?

b) Who are they?

c) Why are they looking for this content?

d) Where are they looking for the content?

e) When are they looking for this content?

a) debca **b) badce** c) ecdba d) cdeab

10) Please match the concepts on the left with the correct definitions on the right.

a) Web content management (WCM)	1) Method for metadata and rendering
b) Enterprise content management (ECM)	2) Method used to organize content at a more general level
c) Digital asset management (DAM)	3) System for content delivery in mass through websites
d) Records management (RM)	4) System used for transactional information and other records

a) a4, b1, c3, d2 b) d1, a3, b2, c4 c**) a3, b2, c1, d4** d) a4, b3, c2, d1

Module 5: Search Engine Optimization for Small and Medium Sized Tourism Enterprises

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Learning Objectives

After reading this unit, the reader will be able to:

- tell the meaning of search engine optimization (seo) and related concepts;
- summarize the relevance and benefits of search engines and its application for marketing tourism and hospitality businesses;
- explain the five components or pillars of seo strategy and ranking factors for web pages;
- remember methods for increasing the ranking of businesses in search engine results page;
- understand metrics and tools of seo analytics for a website.

5.0 Introduction

The internet has become a new channel in the business world. The growing popularity of the internet has allowed marketers to reach customers in an effective and speedy way (Eren, 2009, cited by Yalçın & Köse, 2010). As the internet includes thousands of web pages, search engine optimization provides an easy and efficient way to get desired information or data quickly through search engines. According to Alexa Traffic Rank, Google.com is the most trendy and popular search engine in the world.

It is unquestionable that SEO, which enables business to be found by clients on the internet, is a significant part of marketing. Perhaps, the most noticeable difference of SEO in comparison to traditional marketing is that customers search for businesses rather than businesses looking for clients (Zilincan, 2015). It is relevant for small and medium sized tourism enterprises (SMTEs) to make use of search engines as they improve the visibility of the different services and brands, leading to greater popularity. Thus, it is of great importance to optimize a business's website and content and take

the strategy of SEO into consideration, which will help the company to reach a bigger audience. In this module, we will learn in depth what search engines are and how they work as well as how SMTEs can make use of search engines as a tool to make the business be found easily by consumers on the internet and how this would lead to business performance.

5.1 Search Engine Optimization and Related Concepts

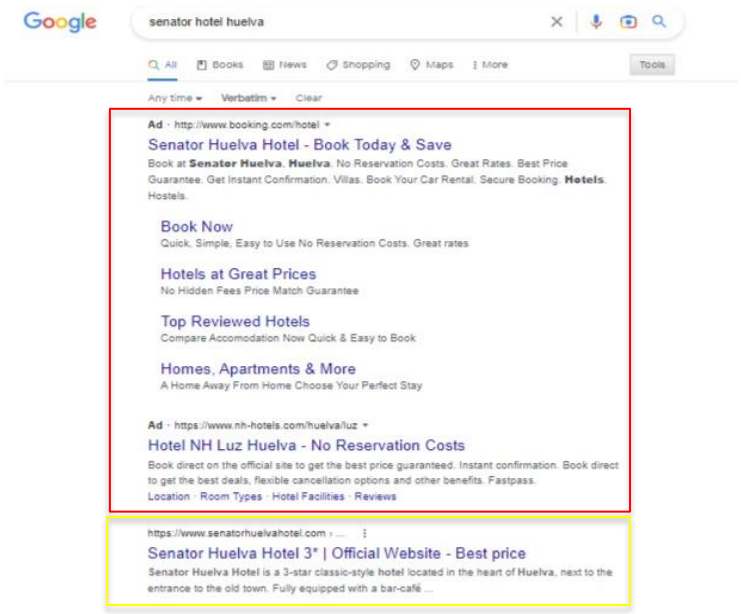
As more and more businesses are conducted online, it is important for businesses to make themselves known on the internet and have a web presence. The key to be found on the internet by the right and suitable people is via search engines; that is, through a search result listing, which is based on what is known as search engine optimization (SEO) or by a pay-per-click (PPC) listing (Kennedy and Kennedy, 2008 cited by Kritzinger & Weideman, 2013). However, in this module, we will focus on the former.

Khraim (2015) explains that search engine optimization (SEO) refers to the procedure of writing, designing and coding a website to improve the visibility, findability and quality of a business website on the internet. The role of SEO is tied in with achieving the highest-ranking position on search engine results page. The aim of SEO is to improve the ranking of a website and make the website appear in the very first pages on the search engine results page.

When people search for a product, brand or business they tend to examine only a few pages of search engine results. After exploring the first three or four result pages, other pages are not taken into consideration by users. Due to this fact, it should be considered to move a web page to the top lists of search engine results page. In order to accomplish it, the information or data related to the business is collected by using search engines. In a competitive business environment, a company can raise its web page to the top lists to achieve the highest (or one of the highest) positions by using search engine optimization techniques. Moreover, it is significant to have a well-structured, effective and attractive web page in order to introduce the services, products of a particular business in a better way (Yalçın & Köse, 2010).

Figure 1 shows an example of how the search results are displayed following a search for “Hotel in Huelva” on Google. Those marked in red (top ads) are ranked highest in the search results; those marked in yellow (organic results) appear below the top ads. These paid ads or organic results can also be presented on sideways.

Figure 1: Search Results for Senator Hotel in Huelva


Google
senator hotel huelva
All
Books
News
Shopping
Maps
More
Tools
Any time
Verbatim
Clear
Ad · http://www.booking.com/hotel
Senator Huelva Hotel - Book Today & Save
Book at Senator Huelva, Huelva. No Reservation Costs. Great Rates. Best Price Guarantee. Get Instant Confirmation. Villas. Book Your Car Rental. Secure Booking. Hotels. Hostels.
Book Now
Quick, Simple, Easy to Use No Reservation Costs. Great rates
Hotels at Great Prices
No Hidden Fees Price Match Guarantee
Top Reviewed Hotels
Compare Accomodation Now Quick & Easy to Book
Homes, Apartments & More
A Home Away From Home Choose Your Perfect Stay
Ad · https://www.nh-hotels.com/huelva/luz
Hotel NH Luz Huelva - No Reservation Costs
Book direct on the official site to get the best price guaranteed. Instant confirmation. Book direct to get the best deals, flexible cancellation options and other benefits. Fastpass.
Location · Room Types · Hotel Facilities · Reviews
https://www.senatorhuelvahotel.com
Senator Huelva Hotel 3* | Official Website - Best price
Senator Huelva Hotel is a 3-star classic-style hotel located in the heart of Huelva, next to the entrance to the old town. Fully equipped with a bar-café ...

In the world of internet commerce, ranking high on search engine results page is of great importance. Recent studies on users' behaviours have shown that 92% of users tend to glance at results only within the first search engine results page (Shelton, 2017). This means that if a website does not appear on the first page, it does not have the chance of being seen and found by majority of users searching on the internet. If a website is not in the top 30, that means that the website has very few opportunities to be read by searchers (Wedeiman, 2009; Clay, 2006, cited by Kritzinger, & Weideman, 2013). As shown in Figure 1, that is how a search on Google would look, being the first page the most highlighting one, followed by the next three pages, and which according to the previous research mentioned, a great number of users (92%) would click on the first of them. Thus, it is highly significant to raise the webpage to the topmost on the search listings. Although the major aim of SEO is to optimize traffic to a business website through searches on search engines, the objective of businesses is to increase their profits. For this reason, one of the primary steps in this optimization process is recognizing and identifying the costs and advantages of distinct strategies for increasing traffic (Baye et al., 2016).

There are several concepts closely related to search engine optimization and they are explained below.

• **Search Engine Marketing (SEM)**: This term was introduced by Sullivan (2001) to make reference to a diversity of activities involved in managing pay per click (PPC) listings, carrying out SEO, working out online marketing strategies for businesses and submitting websites to directories. SEM is also considered as a way of web marketing that searches for promoting websites by raising their visibility in search result pages (Kritzinger & Weideman, 2013).

• **Search Engine Advertising**: Search engine advertising is a type of online marketing in which paid advertisements are shown on search engines such as Google. These advertisements can be seen in the search engine result pages. Advertising on search engines can be a useful and worthwhile way to improve our brand or business; because using this practice makes our business and web contents more visible on the internet.

• **Paid Online Advertising:** Paid online advertising is the purchase of online advertising spaces or spots to attract internet traffic and consumers. Advertisements are placed on relevant websites. Cost of the paid online advertising depends on the number of interactions with the content or it can have a fixed cost established for maintaining advertising on websites (Haas, 2019).

• **Pay-Per-Click advertising (PPC)**: PPC is used in order to describe different overlapping practices which make reference to linking individual websites to concrete keywords for payment (Moxley et al., 2004). Accordingly, potential customers are directly taken to a website by choosing keywords that their particular target market will employ in a search (Curran, 2004 cited by Kritzinger, & Weideman, 2013; Moxley et al., 2001).

• **Directories and Website Portals**: Website portals is a web pages collection related to, and common with, an internet domain in the World Wide Web (Sitio Web, 2021). Web directory is a web place that contains data, images or links to other web places. Web directory is characterized by containing categories and subcategories structures. Directories and website portals can be considered like pages or web sites included in the World Wide Web that allow us to place our content on the internet.

5.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of Search Engine Optimisation

The most common advantages of SEO are explained below (Kharim, 2015).

- The primary benefit of SEO is related to the fact that a company or business can be ranked in the highest ranks of search engine results page without any fuss. When users look for the information they need, they are more likely to opt for those sections which appear on the first page. If a website ranks high, it becomes easier to find, leading to a growth of traffic (Nezar, 2009, cited by Khraim, 2015).
- The use of SEO saves a lot of money and time, as it is a cost-effective way of marketing in comparison to traditional marketing. Moreover, the effect of SEO can last longer than other tools if the website is designed suitably and properly.
- SEO leads to a major brand visibility. More visitors and users will be attracted to the website when consumers search for the brand and services a business is providing through the website.
- A website is available and valid for a great number of online clients in a suitable way. A better optimized website is more likely to attract more potential clients.
- An increase in accessibility leads to higher sales for the services and products (Lourdes and Paloma, 2013, cited by Khraim, 2015).

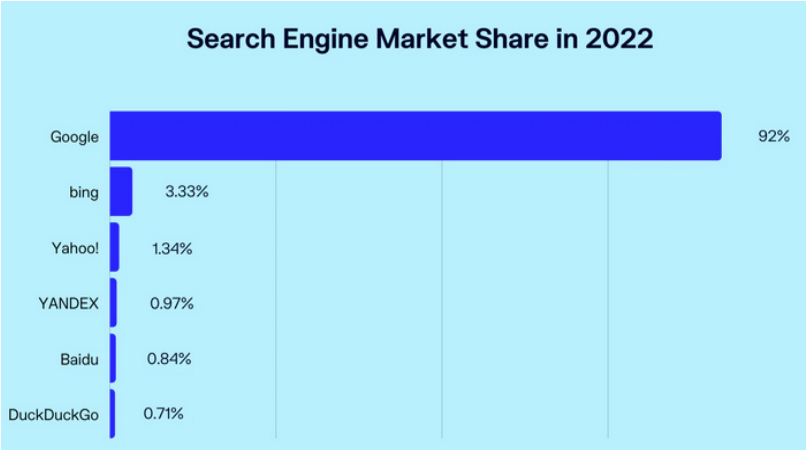
Regarding SEO's drawbacks, the major disadvantages are the following (Kritzinger & Weideman, 2013):

- SEO cannot guarantee top rankings (Visser and Weideman, 2011).
- One obstacle to performing a functional SEO program is the fact that each search engine contains its peculiar requisites which means that a website optimized for one search engine is not optimized for the rest (Sen, 2005).
- Another disadvantage refers to the fact that search engines are continuously changing their ranking algorithms to avoid search engine spam. Because of this, websites have to be constantly actualizing their SEO strategies, which can be expensive.

The most common search engine companies which produce more searches are Google (the most outstanding), Bing, Yahoo, Yandex, Baidu and DuckDuckGo. Figure 2 shows market share of search engine companies in 2022. As shown in

Figure 2, Google handles 92% of all search queries across all search engine providers, implying that more than nine out of ten internet users who search for information online use Google. In comparison, Microsoft's Bing, which currently has a market share of 3.33%, only manages a fraction of Google's volume. Yahoo is the third most popular search engine, with a 1.34% market share.

Figure 2: Market Share of Search Engines



Source: Oberlo, 2022

5.3 How Search Engines Work

In order to implement a successful SEO strategy, it is of great importance to understand how search engines work as well as what people are seeking. Search engines are complex and elaborated software applications which are automated to investigate (“spider” or “crawl”) the internet in order to find websites and collect data about different websites. The collected data covers some keywords of the content of the web site, the web site URL, the code structure as well as the links provided on the web site. The related data is stored on a database. All this is made by the search engine software (spider, crawler, bot). A search engine crawler is a program (also known as “bot” or “robot”) that searches the web in an automated and logical way. Search engines make use of these crawlers in order to find up-to-date data (Khraim, 2015; Yalçın, & Köse, 2010).

The goal of search engines is to bring the user the most relevant content based on the keyword used for searching. When a user or customer search for a specific

keyword, search engines search the web by “crawling” to find the most relevant content depending on the searched keyword (Neher, 2019). Neher (2019, p.124) explains the steps and processes involved in the working of a search engine as follows:

Step 1-Web Crawling: Search engines send out search bots known as "crawlers" or "spiders" to crawl the web using an automated software program;

Step 2-Analyzing Websites: Spiders evaluate and learn about a site by analysing metadata and keywords, as well as other data such as links to other sites and pages;

Step 3-Indexing: Spiders compile their findings from each page to create an index. The indexes are stored in massive data centres built all over the world;

Step 4-Finding the content: When a user enters a keyword query into a search engine, the search engine uses algorithms to sift through billions of indexes to pull out the most relevant results;

Step 5-Displaying Search Engine Results Page (SERP): Users are provided with rankings of websites that search engines have determined to be the most relevant and popular.

According to Neher (2019) Google bases the content we view on three fundamental components on the internet: Authority, Relevance, and Technical.

Authority: It is the importance of the website evaluated by the search engine. Google uses many factors to evaluate the authority of the website like the age of the domain, legitimacy of a site, social media profiles and links.

Relevance: It is about how relevant a site is for a specific term that is searched. Therefore, it is important to use the most relevant phrases and keywords regarding content of the website and searched terms.

Technical Aspects: Technical aspects includes availability of a sitemap, readability of files, logical organization of the content, existence of appropriate sub-pages or category pages to drive search traffic to a site.

5.4 Components of Search Engine Optimisation Strategy

For tourism and hospitality organizations, SEO strategy involves the use of critical tools and means for ranking high in search engine results page. Search engines do not reveal algorithm for online searching. But it is generally accepted that there are 5 critical components of a successful SEO strategy: identifying search keywords, developing high-quality content, on-page optimization, off-page optimization and technical optimization (Heinze, 2020; Kumar et al., 2019). Each component of SEO strategy is briefly explained below.

5.4.1 Identifying Search Keywords

In order to increase the possibilities for a company or brand to be in a higher position in a search results page, keywords used by consumers to search tourism and hospitality related products need to be considered. The most crucial thing is to identify and employ the most precise terms which are related to our business and products on the contents of the webpage. Keywords are the resource that will help customers and other users to find us easily among the thousands and even millions of results that a search engine like Google can give for a search.

A keyword, as Fleischner describes in his SEO Made Simple (2020), is any word or phrase that best describes our business and the content on the website. Another way of seeing keywords is that they are what users type into the Google search box for looking for specific businesses or products. If we want to find the best keywords for our website, first we must think like the user would think and wonder what they would type in when they’re looking for the services that we provide. For instance, if our company offers food, we need to consider what the searchers would write in the search bar.

A search engine can give us two types of results: digital ads and organic search results. If we google “Hotels in Istanbul”, we will get ads results at the top of the list and organic search results below them. We will also see URLs. These URLs take us to the websites of hotels that are in Istanbul. This is because those ads and websites have used “hotels and İstanbul” in their descriptions, in the coding of their web pages, and

on their website. We need to take into consideration that Google works essentially with keywords, and the closer they are to users' search queries, the better for us.

Now that we know how keywords work, we need to consider "search volume". The search volume is how much a keyword is demanded; this is, how many times it is typed in by users. So even if we think we have a good keyword that relates to our product or business, it does not necessarily mean that it is well demanded or used by the target market. Therefore, part of the keyword research is to check how much the keywords that we want to utilize are used (Kelsey, 2017). There are two easy tools/websites that will help us with our keyword research. On the one hand, we have Wordtracker, and it will show us what the search volume for a keyword or keywords approximately is. It has 5 free searches and then we can buy the plan that best fits our needs. In addition to the search volume of the keyword that we type, it also gives us keyword suggestions that we can have a look, showing their search volume and the competition. When a suggestion is more specific it is called a "long-tail keyword" (Kelsey, 2017). Another tool is Google AdWords. Even if we are not very concerned about ads yet, it can help us see real data about keywords too, such as the search volume and the competition that there is for the keywords that we want to use. We must bear in mind that Google is like a "voting machine", which means that the better and more precise our keywords are, the better. Let's draw on the hotel business again. If we search for hotels in İstanbul on Google, the big companies will be most likely to appear. Then, we need to be more specific with our keywords or keyword phrases. For example, we can search for "youth hostels in Taksim, İstanbul". There is less competition for such specific keywords and phrases than more general ones, which will differentiate our business from others, giving more traffic to our website (Fleischner, 2020).

Another thing that is convenient to remember is that there is competition. Our company is probably not the only one offering the same services that we provide, so we need to consider how much we are willing to pay for a click on our ads (if we're running ads) and that they might be using the same keywords that we want to use. Remember that everyone wants to be the first to appear in a search engine results list. Our world is run by efficiency along with speed, and users are most likely to not look at the results on page 2, let alone the other pages. Keep in mind that Google, is like a voting machine, so we need to question ourselves whether we can optimize our web

(both on-page and off-page) and our content to attract more clients or not compared to competition. Improving our SEO is more about outdoing our competition and applying it to our SEO strategy than having perfect SEO techniques that do not really help us (Fleischner, 2020). There are four criteria that can be used to select the right keyword among alternative keywords: relevance, specificity, popularity and competition (Heinze, 2020).

Relevance: Selected keywords should be the most relevant keywords to the business of the service provider as well as consumer search terms.

Specificity: Selected keywords should specifically define service providers' business, products and consumers' search terms. Longer keyword phrases are more specific in general.

Popularity: Popularity is the frequency of the use of keywords and phrases, which can be measured by the average monthly or yearly search volume.

Competition for the Term: Paid search results are used to gather information about how popular specific queries and keyword phrases are. Because of this, it is a less useful indicator of rivalry for organic SEO, but it still shows the level of competition.

5.4.2 Developing High-Quality Content

Creating and publishing valuable, relevant, and consistent content on business websites and digital channels is critical for search engine optimization. The published content on the internet platforms including websites should reflect your keyword research and keywords used by consumers for searching relevant business, brand or product (Heinze, 2020). It should also give valuable, consistent and realistic information regarding the business, product or brand. The content of the webpage should also be aligned with target customers' information needs and expectations (Heinze, 2020). The key attributes of high-quality content include the following (Heinze, 2020; Singhal, 2011):

- The content should be relevant, appealing, original, detailed and accessible to your target customers.

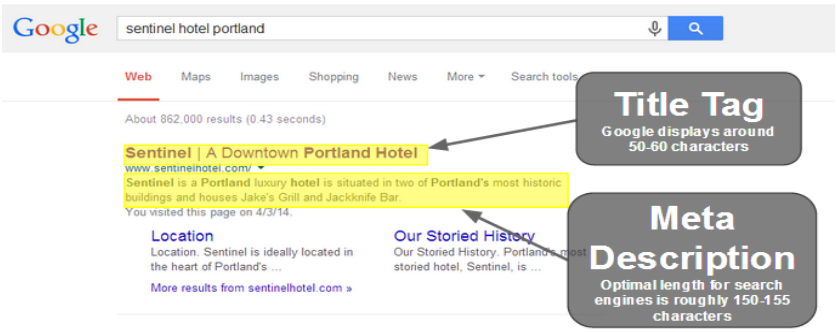
- The content should not be the same as other web pages or copied from other web pages.
- The content should include images and video linked to other relevant pages within your site.
- The content should include a clear call-to-action (e.g., email signup, download, subscribe, call a number, comment or share).
- The contents should be easy to understand and clear.
- The content should be interesting enough to engage the user.

5.4.3 On-site Search Engine Optimization

It refers to those actions used in order to optimize 'website navigation and to shape the hierarchy of your web pages – your website architecture' that reflects researched critical keywords (Heinze, 2020, p.179). On-site SEO is highly relevant for raising any blog or website to the higher rank in search engines as well as to gain organic traffic from search engines. On-site SEO process comprises those constituents directly connected to the website. The most critical elements of on-site SEO are: title tag, meta description tag, heading tag, and URL.

Title Tag: A title tag is the title of a web page. Titles are both significant and the most basic constituent for search engine relevance. As shown in Figure 3, the page title presents the main topics of the concrete web page. The title tag appears in the <head> area of the HTML, being the major metadata about the page which impacts and influences the most.

Figure 3: Title Tag and Meta Description Tag of a Hotel Website


Google
sentinel hotel portland
Web
Maps
Images
Shopping
News
More
Search tools
About 862,000 results (0.43 seconds)
Sentinel | A Downtown Portland Hotel
www.sentinelhotel.com/
Sentinel is a Portland luxury hotel is situated in two of Portland's most historic buildings and houses Jake's Grill and Jackknife Bar.
You visited this page on 4/3/14.
Location
Location. Sentinel is ideally located in the heart of Portland's ...
More results from sentinelhotel.com »
Our Storied History
Our Storied History. Portland's most storied hotel, Sentinel, is ...
Title Tag
Google displays around 50-60 characters
Meta Description
Optimal length for search engines is roughly 150-155 characters

Description Tag: Meta description tag includes a brief information concerning the page content, and it usually appears after the title in the search engine results page. This meta description tag can be used as a technique to promote the message so that visitors click on it and visit the website. As shown in Figure 3, it is located in the <head> segment after the page title.

Heading Tag: An HTML heading tag is used to define the headings of a page. There are six levels of headings defined by HTML. These 6 heading elements are h1, h2, h3, h4, h5, and h6; with h1 being the highest level and h6 being the least. and the website's history.

Figure 4: Components of an URL

URL: URL stands for Uniform Resource Locator. An URL is address of a given unique resource on the Web. URLs provide information to search engines about the content of a page and impact on rankings and visibility of website. An URL consists of internet protocol, subdomain, domain and domain suffix, directories and web page. SEO-friendly websites should have the following features (Harsel, 2020):

- Include your keyword relating to your business' products/services.
- Be descriptive and meaningful relating to popular searches.
- Make it easy to read.
- Use relevant categories/subfolders.
- Contain around 3 to 5 words if possible.
- Include keywords consumers use to search for your competitor's services.

In addition to these factors, search engines should be considered while designing a web site. Some questions which ought to be answered before starting to design it are the following (Yalçın, & Köse, 2010):

- *Is there any essential focusing or method used on search engines in order to catch users' attention to the related web site?*

- *Which search engine is the related website a business would like to show on?*
- *Which rank on the results page is adequate?*

There are numerous techniques available to achieve visibility, and many of them are a result of how search engine algorithms work. Firstly, the SEO professional will elaborate a list of different phrases or keywords. Relevance, the competitiveness and frequency of use the keywords or phrases are critical. Secondly, it is necessary to connect the website with the search engine index. This can be accomplished by introducing the URLs to the search engines. The third step consists of the manipulation of the on-page elements (page content, title tag, metatags, heading, site navigation) by part of the SEO professional to make the website more appealing and flashier to search engine crawlers (Malaga, 2008; Wedeiman, 2012, cited by Kritzinger, & Weideman, 2013).

Another tool that can be used for on-site SEO is the free Google Business Profile. It is a Google business directory for local search engine optimization. Tourism and hospitality companies can register and populate it with their own content. They can enter their name, physical location address, phone numbers, opening hours, pictures etc. Google suggests the following steps for registering with the Google Business Profile:

1. Access to Google Business Profile in the next link: https://www.google.com/business/.

2. Click on “Manage now”.

3. Access to our business google account or create one in the next url: https://accounts.google.com/SignUpWithoutGmail?dsh=5477399824122189685&continue=https%3A%2F%2Faccounts.google.com%2FManageAccount#FirstName=&LastName=

4. Write the name of our business and click on “Next” (if our business already appears, we could see it in a drop-down list).

5. Write the address of our business and click on “Next”.

6. Select the category of our business and click on “Next” (we can create a category if we need).

7. Write the telephone number(s) of our business and the URL of its website, and click on “Next”.

8. To verify our relation with the business click on “Continue”.

9. Select an option to verify.

In contrast to other search engines, Google's own website-ranking algorithm sets it apart. Previously, the Google PageRank (or Google PR) metric could be used to represent the entire ranking system. Google PR served as a metaphor for the SEO sector. Due to the evolving complexity of the algorithm and developments in artificial intelligence, the Google Page Rank is no longer legitimate, but the idea of being able to analyse our website objectively is still quite alluring for those looking to boost rankings (Fleschner, 2020).

What makes one result appear on Google over another? It starts by giving a certain web page a weight or level of relevance. Numerous variables affect this weight. Think of Google search results as the outcome of a significant election in which both human voters and automated voting systems participated. These votes are based on how effectively we abide by on-site requirements such as page titles and descriptions, off-site requirements such as who links to our website, and other requirements relating to how well our site functions for users.

Google does not regard all inbound links equally; certain votes have more weight than others, in addition to website-specific variables. For instance, a vote from an authoritative website would theoretically have more weight than one from a website with less authority. The unpalatable fact is that various voters' votes are weighted differently. Searching was rather easy back before. If we purchased a URL that contained our keyword, top ranks were all but guaranteed. But over the past few years, Google has concentrated on enhancing the search experience and has made search engine results more difficult than ever. Nowadays, in order to implement SEO efficiently in Google, it is important to understand concepts like user intent, universal search, mobile first, Google Updates

User Intent: Google has discovered user intent thanks to artificial intelligence and machine learning. Google has access to enough information to identify our search terms before we do. For example, if we are looking for restaurants close to us and our favourite is Italian food, the evaluations we've written on various apps and Google Maps' tracking of the restaurants we've already visited will likely result in more Italian eateries showing up in search results. This happens because Google is always improving and already knows what we're looking for. They are engaging in countless trillions of search actions worldwide in addition to simply glancing at us. They gather more data with each keypress or tap, improving the utility of our search. They are gaining a better grasp of what a person does, including the terms they use, the websites and apps they like, as well as the outcomes that are important to them, as indicated by clicks, time spent on screen, and engagement.

Universal Search: With the introduction of video, blogs, podcasts, social media in real-time, and a variety of apps, Google has improved the search experience for all of us. Even small local companies have benefited from the Google Business Profile directory. For everyone interested in SEO, proactive management is also necessary to promote their website, company, or online reputation. Getting several entries on a search results page for pertinent searches has become more important in search engine optimization.

Mobile First: It simply means that Google will start including content from our website's mobile version in its index and use it as the starting point when determining our website's rating. It is not a mobile-only index, hence the term "mobile-first." For instance, even without a mobile-friendly version, a site's desktop version can still be indexed. However, not having a mobile-friendly experience hurts our business rankings, and a site with a superior mobile experience can even rank higher for desktop searches.

Google Updates: A complete overhaul of the Google algorithm has improved the user experience. Google Suggestion, which updates Google, provides search terms as we input our query in search and Gmail.

To get and maintain our website ranked at the top for targeted keywords, we must comprehend how Google has changed. Even though it can seem difficult right

now, it will get simpler as we examine the many strategies for bringing in eligible customers. Google also provides a variety of tools to assist us, Google Search Console is one of them. Register with the Google Search Console if our website is new. It is highly advised to look into the educational resources offered by Google. Information like this is really useful for utilizing Google Console and improving our website. When we have access to the platform, we can:

- Discover how Google sees our website and identify any potential issues. Discover the precise issues Google has accessing our website by looking at how Google crawls and indexes it.
- Find our link and search for traffic. We may view, categorize, and download detailed information on internal and external links to our site using new link reporting capabilities. Learn which Google searches lead people to our website and exactly how they get there.
- Inform people about our website. Use sitemaps to inform Google about our pages, including which ones are the most crucial to our business and how frequently they change. Additionally, we may specify how we want the URLs we index to be displayed.

5.4.4 Off-site Search Engine Optimization

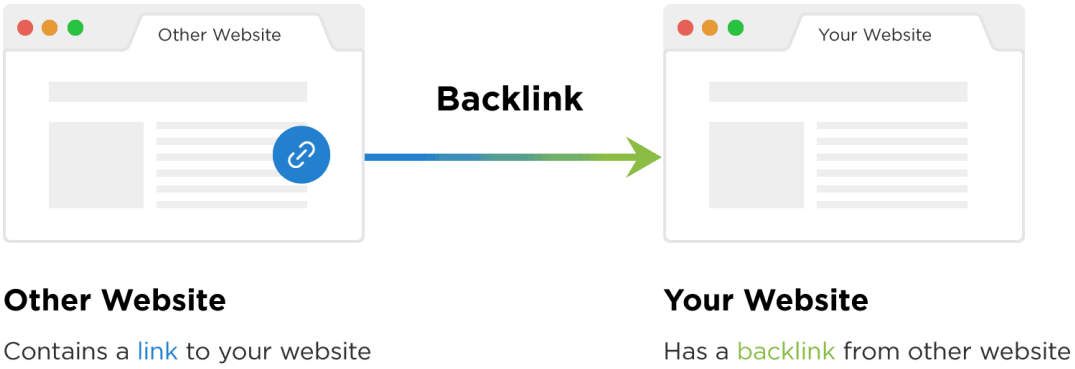
Off-site SEO alludes to those outside conditions and factors which have a result on the website listing on search results page. These are actually the links back to the website from other websites. Links play an important role in SEO, as there is a significant correlation between the quantity and quality of links to the website. The moment Google appeared in our lives, its way of ranking websites in search revolved around the numerous links that the website contained. Therefore, the higher the links, the more likely the website was to have valuable content. It is simple: the more links, the higher the search traffic and the more customers the businesses get. This is known as “link popularity” (the total number of webs which link to a particular website). In other words, links could be considered as “popularity votes", so the more votes a particular business gets, the more popular that business is on Google (Jamison, 2021).

As far as links are concerned, earning links, and link building are critical for off-site SEO. Search engines continue improving their capability to understand and interpret quality content, but “earning links” might be an elaborated and complex

concept for businesses and marketers. It is necessary to make a distinction between what “link building” and “link earning” are. Link building is about creating hyperlinks to a website from other websites in order to improve findability by search engines. On the other hand, “link earning” is the acquisition of links from other websites due to the quality and content of a web page without any marketing effort. Backlinks and link building is critical for SEO.

Backlinks refer to one-way links from other websites to a particular website (Figure 6). Backlinks play a relevant role for SEO, as search engine’s algorithm checks if any website contains a wide number of backlinks. The moment the number of backlinks rise, the search engine ranking and the website’s popularity increases as well (Jain, & Dave, 2013). The number one factor that influence search engine rankings is backlinks (Zauca, 2022). Backlinks can be paid linking or organic linking.

Figure 5: Backlinks to a Website

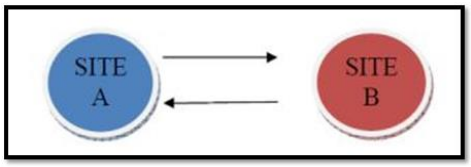


Source: Backlinko, 2022, Retrieved from: https://backlinko.com/hub/seo/backlinks

Link building is a purposeful effort to establish links from other websites that is likely to enhance the website’s popularity. It will also improve the website traffic as well as its the listing on the search results page. There are different types of links, which are presented below (Kumar et al., 2019).

Reciprocal Linking: As shown in Figure 6, reciprocal links refer to the mutual or reciprocal manner of link building based on the exchange of links of two websites to each other. For instance, website A contains an incoming link to website B in the swap of the link X.

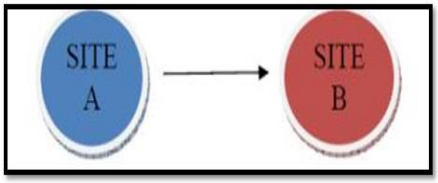
Figure 7: Reciprocal linking



Source: Kumar et al., 2019.

One-way Linking: It is considered as the most valued and effective. As portrayed in Figure 7, one-way linking refers to the practice of a website A links to another website, for instance, website B, and website B does not link back.

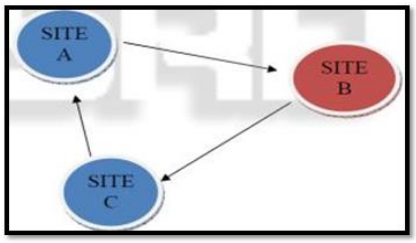
Figure 7: One-way linking



Source: Kumar et al., 2019.

Triangular Linking: It is also known as “Three ways linking”. As shown in Figure 8, the site A links to website B, and then, website C links back to website A.

Figure 8: Triangular linking



Source: Kumar et al., 2019.

5.4.5 Technical Search Engine Optimization

Technical elements can improve the findability and crawlability of your content by search engines. Technical SEO refers to specific configurations applied to the website and server. Technical SEO influences search engine crawling, indexing and rendering (Indig, 2022). The following practices can help the technical efficiency and effectiveness of a website as well as increase findability and crawlability of a website (Indig, 2022; Heinze, 2020):

- An orderly and standardized structure for websites.
- Building an XML (eXtensible Markup Language that is used to describe data) sitemap for websites.
- Indexing website with sitemap.xml which allows website owner to list a page link.
- Having a Robots.txt file, which allows the website to communicate with search engines, located on top of a website.
- Using the 301-redirect method that allows website owners to define the old and new names of a changed web page.

5.5 Search Engine Optimisation Checklist

Through this point, different SEO activities will be provided so that a business organizes its SEO process in an efficient way, achieving top ranking together with an increase in sales (SEO PowerSuite, n.d, p.1-24).

1. Get the right keywords: It is important to set up the most relevant and searched keywords relating to your business, product or customer searches.

2. Make the website accessible: A business needs to make sure that the website's content is not blocked from indexing. Moreover, it is important to check that the content is not blocked by the "noindex" tag in the <head> section of pages, the robots.txt file in the root directory or the X-Robots-Tag in the HTTP header. If search engines cannot access the content, then it will not be shown in search results.

3. Fix issues with URLs and links: The first step is to make URLs static, followed by fixing too long URLs, making URLs descriptive and fixing broken links.

4. Take care of code and performance: It is necessary to make the pages' code valid and to improve page load speed (by utilizing browser caching, applying the file compression, putting the scripts at the bottom, optimizing graphics and video size or reducing the number of frames).

5. Optimize site's landing pages: The first step is to select the landing pages and assign keywords for them, followed by optimizing the landing pages.

6. Check on-page/content factors: Re-write or duplicate missing titles (also paying attention to too long titles), revise meta descriptions, diversify text-only content, insert keywords in document names (.pdf, .ppt, doc, etc.) and reduce the number of outgoing links.

7. Find and analyse site's backlinks: The first step is to find all the site's backlinks. Then, analyse the current backlinks, followed by improving the quality of backlinks, removing links with high penalty risk. The last step is to compare the site's backlinks with competitors.

8. Do link outreach: Get more backlinks (the more backlinks a website has, the better), and verify the most important backlinks.

9. Use social Media: The use of social networks such as Twitter, Google, Facebook or LinkedIn has had a great impact over the last few years. Actually, hundreds of millions of people across these social networks who find new content, share it with their followers and friends. In accordance with SEOmoz, the quantity of social activity which a website has on social networks (links, recommendations, likes, shares, etc.) is of great importance for a page's ranking. Therefore, search engines are aware of the great influence of shared content on social networks, which would make a website rank higher (HubSpot, w.d.). Businesses can create Facebook and Instagram accounts in order to engage consumers in discussing the posts, videos and photos and in sharing the content.

10. Track the progress: It is necessary to check the rankings for keywords, sync the SEO tools with Google Analytics (to be aware of which keywords bring more traffic or to know which backlinks bring more visits to the website), check SEO factors of the site and landing pages and set up events to track what impacts the site's growth.

11. Extras: Improve your online presence: Produce some videos (as they are a significant tool used to generate more traffic and sales) in different video content platforms such as YouTube or present the business by publishing some presentations with links and useful information by different platforms, like SlideShare.

5.6 Search Engine Optimization Analytics

SEO analytics is 'the process of collecting and analysing raw data to better inform your search engine optimization efforts' and performance of SEO practices (Larkin, 2021). In a way SEO analytics measure the performance of SEO practices and implementations. The role of SEO analytics is to improve SEO (Kral, 2019). Having an effective and useful SEO analytics process allow businesses to:

- Be aware of what's going on regarding the traffic to the website.
- Know the reason for what's going on.
- Find opportunities and gaps.
- Make suggestions to act on the insight.
- Calculate the expected result of the recommended action.

A business can analyse and measure traffic to a website by using the Google Analytics tool. This way, a company can be aware of different aspects and facts concerning the website and its visits such as visit time, duration of visit, bounce rate, keywords which generate high bounce rate etc. (Egri & Bayrak, 2014). Which is the marketing campaign which works in a more effective way? How does a business quantify its success? Which indicators should a business track? Google Analytics has the answer to these questions, as it is the expert guidance any business needs in order to improve the services or brands and increase the site. Through Google Analytics, a business can learn how to (Clifton, 2012):

- Track online campaigns and centralize the data collection.
- Measure the web traffic as well as be aware of its impact.
- Target the visitor segments or time periods that the business chooses.
- Track flash events, dynamic web pages or banners and follow the best practices for page tagging.
- Find out how long it takes for the users and visitors to become customers.
- Optimize SEO, checkout systems, email marketing, pay-per-click campaigns.

- Configure the data collection parameters, followed by an extraction and analysis of the collected data.

Google Search Console also provide important information about the traffic to your website and any problems in finding and indexing the website. There are many metrics and software tools to measure SEO analytics. Table 1 lists a number of key performance indicators or metrics and useful tools to measure the pillars or components of SEO strategy including content, on-site SEO, off-site SEO and technical SEO.

Table 1: Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Analytical Tools for Components of SEO Strategies

SEO PILLAR	EXAMPLES OF KPIs	EXAMPLE TOOLS
Content	• Number of comments • Time spent on page • Completion of call-to-action • Traffic generated • Keyword visibility in SERPs	• Google Analytics • Google Search Console Tool/Webmaster Tools • SEMrush • Moz
On-page SEO	• Reduction of errors such as duplicate titles, descriptions and headings	• Screaming Frog • Yoast's WordPress SEO plugin
Off-page SEO	• Number and quality of links to a page • Number of shares to a page	• Link Explorer – Moz
Technical SEO	• Reduction of technical errors such as w3c validator approval and website speed approval	• Found SEO Tools • DeepCrawl • Google Search Console

Source: Heinze, 2020, p. 201.

5.7 Conclusion

Implementing a useful SEO strategy is essential for a business to be successful on the internet. In the conclusion, a list of dos and don'ts about the SEO is summarized below. (Santamaría Morillas, 2017):

- Do a study with keywords related to your business and product and make a technical audit of the content and popularity of the site.
- Create a significant anchor text which includes the main keywords (remember its keywords must be directly related with your business, brand or product).
- Increase the user's visit time on the web.
- Avoid duplicate content, as it may be harmful for the search engine indexing and listing.
- Promote your website with links from other relevant websites.
- Adapt the website to mobile devices.
- Examine analytics of the website.
- Elaborate an action plan with short, medium and long term aims.
- Do not forget to adapt the content to HTML.
- Invest in social media links.
- Avoid and/or correct penalties.
- Transcribe the video content to text and optimize it.
- Have your website in other countries' languages (national language and English could be perfect).
- Try to avoid broken links and make use of different tools in order to know your website's position on the search engine results page.
- Make the content more appealing and attractive.
- Use Robots.txt to give commands to searchers.
- Do not show the same title in all the URLs of the website.
- Increase the web's loading speed.

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Assessment Questions

1) Which of the following statements best describe search engine optimization (SEO)?

a. **It means the process and practice of improving a website's visibility and ranking in search engines.**
b. It is an internet advertising model used to drive traffic to websites, in which an advertiser pays a publisher when the ad is clicked.
c. It is a marketing metric that measures the total cost of a customer completing a specific action.
d. It refers to linking individual websites to concrete keywords for payment.

2) Which of the following is NOT a disadvantage of SEO?

a. SEO cannot guarantee top rankings.
b. Search engines are continuously changing their ranking algorithms.
c. Each search engine contains its peculiar requisites.
d. SEO leads to brand visibility on the internet.

3) Which of the following options is NOT a component of SEO strategy and ranking factor?

a. High quality content
b. Search keywords
c. Inside the SEO
d. Off-site SEO

4) The most frequently used search engine worldwide is ……
a) Google b) Baidu c) Bing d) Yandex

5) Search engines evaluate and learn about a site by analysing …… and ……..
a) spiders and **crawlers** **b) keywords and metadata** c) SERP and index d) robots and ads

6) Backlinks refer to one-way links from other websites to a particular website.
a) True b) False

7) The number one factor that influence search engine rankings is backlinks.
a) True b) False

8) On-site SEO refers to reduction of errors regarding title tag, metadata description tags and heading tags and URL.
a) True b) False

9) Please put the following statements about how search engines work in the correct order?
1) Indexing
2) Analysing websites
3) Web crawling
4) Displaying Search Engine Results Page
5) Finding the content

a) 5,4,3,2,1 **b) 3,2,1,5,4** c) 2,1,3,4,5 d) 4,3,2,1,5

10) Please match the concepts on the left with the correct definitions on the right.

a) Google Business Profile	1) It is a free tool that helps you track the performance of your website
b) Link earning	2) It refers to the links to a website from other websites which influence website ranking on search engine results page.
c) Google Search Console	3) It is a free Google business directory for local search engine optimization.
d) Off-site SEO	4) It is the acquisition of links from other websites due to the quality and content of a web page without any marketing effort

a) a3, b2, c1, d4 b) a2, b1, c4, d3 **c) a3, b4, c1, d2** d) a4, b2, c3, d1

Module 6: Digital Advertising for Small and Medium Sized Tourism Enterprises

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Learning Objectives

On successful completion of this module the learner will be able to:

- understand the term of digital advertising and related concepts;
- tell the importance and benefits of digital advertising applications in marketing communication;
- identify types of digital advertising formats;
- know the process for creating and managing advertising content on the google search engine and several social media platforms;
- create and manage advertising content on the google search engine and several social media platforms;
- understand the most important components of efficient digital advertising;
- use key performance indicators in their digital advertising campaigns.

6.0 Introduction

Advertising as a form of marketing communication is an essential part of the promotion of small and medium sized tourism and hospitality enterprises (SMTEs). For many years, marketing communication and campaigns relied on conventional media including TV, print and radio advertisements, and direct mail supported by public relations. Since the web concept was first proposed in the late 1980s by Sir Tim Berners-Lee, there have been huge changes in the use of tools for marketing communication. The digital equivalents of these traditional media, which are known as digital media channels, have become essential parts of a successful marketing

campaign and communication. For instance, in an online campaign, marketers can use display ads, pay-per-click (PPC) ads search engine optimization (SEO) to gain higher positions in the search results, and content on social media to engage audiences. “Many of these digital communication techniques are equivalent to the conventional ones – for example, display ads are broadly similar to print or display ads and email marketing is equivalent to direct mail. But the approaches used to target the online audience are potentially very different, with personalized results depending on the customer and previous interactions with communications giving a bunch of choices to deliver faster, accurate messages” (Chaffey, 2016 p.456). As the use of digital media has become the norm, advertising across all digital channels has surpassed conventional advertising. In 2021, digital advertising accounted for 64.4 percent of total adverting spending worldwide (www.statista.com).

This module aims to present the basic elements of digital advertising and its utilization in small and medium sized tourism and hospitality businesses. The definition of digital advertising and other related concepts is given in a comprehensive way and several forms and types of digital ads are presented. This unit also explains the process for creating and managing advertising content on the google search engine and several social media platforms, and the most important factors for creating efficient digital advertising campaigns. It also offers insights into the measurement of digital marketing performance.

6.1. Digital Advertising and Related Concepts

Advertising is a marketing communication method that attempts to inform and influence the buying behavior of potential customers and consumers of a product or service. The short way to refer to that is an advert or “ad”. It’s a one-way message to promote and advertise a brand, product, service or even an idea. The unique ability to deliver a specific message to several people has given it a crucial role in marketing businesses (Hopper, 2020). There is a great number of advertising types but one of the most important and commonly used is digital adverting. Digital advertising is a non-personal and paid form of communication by an identified sponsor to promote businesses, goods, services or ideas on the internet and digital platforms (Richards and Curran, 2002). Online advertising, web advertising or internet advertising is used synonymously with digital advertising and all refers to the same form of marketing

communication. There are different forms or types of digital advertising such as display ads, emails ads, mobile ads, search engine ads and social media ads. Digital advertising is often confused with search engine advertising which is a type of digital advertising. Search engine advertising, also known as paid search advertising, online search advertising or paid search marketing, is a type of digital advertising where advertisers bid and pay to rank higher in the search results pages of various search engines such as Google, Bing and Yahoo when users search for a relevant keyword. Search engine advertising is different from search engine marketing and search engine optimization. Search engine marketing or SEM is the technique used to promote 'an organization through search engines to meet its objectives by delivering relevant content in the search listings for searchers and encouraging them to click through to a destination site'. (Chaffey & Ellis- Chadwick, 2016 p.672). Search engine marketing has two components: search engine advertising and search engine optimization. Search engine advertising involves paid content placement by an identified sponsor (Heinze, Fletcher, Rashid & Cruz, 2021) whereas search engine optimization is about ways and means of ranking high in the search engine results page without any payment to search engines. Another term that is often confused with digital advertising is pay-per-click (PPC) advertising. In simple words, PPC means that an advertiser pays the advertising platform when their advert is clicked on (Stroke: 290, 2011). PPC advertising may involve different types of digital advertising such as search engine advertising, social media advertising or display advertising as well as different channels and platforms.

6.2. Advantages and Disadvantages of Digital Advertising

Digital advertising can tremendously help businesses of all sizes. Main benefits and disadvantages of digital advertising are summarized below.

6.2.1. The Benefits of Digital Advertising

It facilitates targeted marketing: Online advertising aims at a specified audience and works as a behavioral targeting technique. With an appropriate search engine keyword search you get all the words related to your business. The more filters and advanced targeting options you use to create your target group, the more efficient your campaign

will be. Adverts are posted on websites about the content of those sites and relevance of these sites to the keywords defined by the advertiser (Heinze, Fletcher, Rashid & Cruz, 2021). In the case of social media advertising, it is possible to profile consumers in terms of demographics and geography and send different advertising messages to different market segments. Digital advertising enables businesses, no matter how big or small, to have a presence to sell online to specific target consumers or buyer persona (Chaffey, 2017). Through digital marketing, business get a global reach and they get the opportunity to reach new markets and make new trades.

It is affordable and cost- effective: The cost to create an advertisement online seems affordable and lower compared to the one of offline or mass media advertising. The more well-planned and targeted your advertising campaign, the more successful your business will be. Pay-per-click campaign is a great example of the low-cost benefit of digital advertising. The potential customers see your advertisement online but you pay only if they click on it.

It is controlled and managed by the company: Businesses can control the settings of their campaign and make adjustments if needed.

It is measurable: The next benefit of online advertising is the fact that businesses get analytics of their online advertising campaigns. They can manage and control everything from the daily budget to monitoring their overall expenses. Every time that you see something that does not go the way you planned, you make new adjustments and set new goals. You have every little detail of your advertising campaign from the number of daily clicks to your overall revenue.

It creates awareness and brand image: Sharing is another great advantage of online advertising. Attractive digital advertising may reach to a wider audience through sharing and publicity online. People can write reviews and share their opinion about a business or brand advertisement online which may lead to an increase in awareness, brand image and sales.

6.2.2. The Disadvantages of Digital Advertising

No one can deny the fact that there are also some negative aspects when utilizing the digital advertising technique (Donson, 2016).

It may be time-consuming: It may be proven time-consuming as it takes longer to plan and create your online marketing campaign. The advanced settings and filters you may need to use to target your audience and control every small detail need time to be carefully planned and designed. Furthermore, time should be also devoted to analyzing your results to see if your campaign was efficient or if you need adjustments.

Special knowledge and skills are needed: If the manager of the online campaign does not have the right knowledge and skills to conduct the whole process successfully, there will be a problem. The environment, the trends and market needs, the platforms and tools are so fast-paced that the manager needs to be updated and alert for everything.

High competition: Digital advertising gives a business the opportunity to reach a wider audience not just in proximity but also on a global scale. This creates the problem of high competition as the business will have to compete with other similar businesses throughout the world. The more attention businesses gain for their good or service the more traffic they get and as a result, they may have the chance to stand out. However, there is the risk of digital advertising messages being lost among hundreds of competing messages online.

Being exposed to negative publicity: The advantage of “sharing” mentioned above can easily become a disadvantage since the feedback and criticism is open and visible to everyone online. Negative posts and comments about your services or product can pose a huge threat to your advertising campaign.

Observing privacy and data protection regulations: Another issue that rises when it comes to digital advertisements is the fact that laws, terms and regulations should not be forgotten under no circumstances. Businesses must comply with the rules and regulations regarding privacy and personal data protection. For instance, when conducting PPC campaigns, do not collect personal information about users, such as names and addresses. This is related to the personally identifiable information (PII) policy that Google enforces quite strictly. Additionally, every single website must do

this to be in line with cookie legislation directives. “These directives state that you must always be upfront and clear with your users about what you intend to use their data for. This use should be in line with their rights of data protection, and their data should be kept secure and never transferred outside the country you are using it in without appropriate protection” (Donson, 2016, p.140).

6.3. Digital Advertising Expenditures and Trends

The new digital technologies have always had enormous on impact on the way consumers behave online and business advertise their products. There has been a digital transformation which is the source of changes (Lee, 2020: 332). This transformation is used by marketers to secure their competitiveness and revenue. The boring static and plain advertisements have changed through the years reaching a level where music, videos and compelling images are utilized extremely bringing forward a totally different paid advertising market. The rapid growth of mobile phone usage has contributed to this change, too. In this way, marketers have greater opportunities and many new tools to reach their audience anytime anywhere.

As the media change so do the users. This means that businesses should change also their marketing communication strategy and advertising campaigns, to be up-to-date. Digital advertising spending worldwide amounted to 521.02 billion U.S. dollars in 2021. It is projected that by 2026, the spending would reach 876 billion dollars (www.statista.com).

With digital media, every contact and interaction between the business and customer is recorded and every little piece of data is stored, waiting to be utilized for new adjustments and optimizations. The era of big data is here to stay providing business essential insight into their advertising campaigns. Automated advertising or else programmatic buying optimizes and tracks every detail of the advertisement to achieve better results for your company. The production of advertisements does not depend on personal experiences and intuitions but it is data-based. “The new term “Dynamic Creative Optimization (DCO)” gives the marketer the ability to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of an ad by adapting advertising creatives to the customer’s real-time interests” (Lee, 2020, p.336).

Display advertising is extremely popular amongst larger brands, but smaller organizations looking for targeted brand awareness can also reap the benefits of this method. Display advertising relies on preparing creative content such as images and video, which tend to be more labor-intensive and require more resources and skills. This is particularly important, since the organic content reach on major social network sites such as Facebook and Twitter are in decline. (Heinze, Fletcher, Rashid & Cruz, 2021).

Interactivity is the first and foremost that needs to be understood when it comes to digital advertising. The more interactivity with consumers a business has the more profitable the advertising campaign will be. The new term “smart adverting” has appeared giving a new view on digital advertising. Smart advertising is all about smart technology. Smart ads embody advertising techniques that target the audience really carefully, the location and time of the ad display are specified and the content of the ad is more personalized and dynamic. The term digital advertising though cannot be replaced by smart advertising since the digital advertising industry is still reluctant to use such a new practice.

As for search engine advertising, the most famous search engines are Google, Baidu, Yahoo! Bing Network, Yandex, Mail.ru and Seznam. They provide the users with millions of results every second and consist a cost-effective way for businesses to target markets and reach out to the buyer personas they aim at. “Google as the most popular search engine in all European countries, has more than a 90 percent market share of the search engine market in most countries. However, on a global scale there are exceptions and the market is in constant flux. For example, in China Google only has a 3 percent market share. For China, local search engines such as Baidu have over 75 percent, Sogou over 10 percent and Shenma over 4 percent market share. Speaking the language and knowing the local culture would be the requirements for any brand wishing to venture out to Chinese consumers. Yahoo! Bing, Network serves over 3 percent of search queries in Europe overall. The Russian search engine Yandex has lost its market share in several countries in Eastern Europe, most notably in Belarus and Ukraine and even in the Russian Federation. It might be an option for those advertisers targeting Russian speakers in Moldova, Estonia and Latvia, though the market share of this search engine does not exceed 5 percent there. The

international version of this engine also has a small search engine market share in Turkey" (Heinze, Fletcher, Rashid & Cruz, 2021).

6.4 Types of Digital Advertising

The marketing industry has been taken over by digital advertising especially during the last fifteen years. There is an abundance of different choices and marketers should be updated all the way. Display advertising, social media advertising, native search advertising, video advertisement and email advertisement are the most important types of digital advertising.

6.4.1 Display Advertisement

Display advertisement is the most conventional type of digital advertising and contain pictures and text. These are usually banners, landing pages, pop-ups and flash advertisements. There are specific types of ad formats that are commonly used. There include the following (www.digitalmarketinginstitute.com).

Leaderboards: These are generally on the top of a page. They are the most efficient ones since they catch the reader's attention.

Mid-placement Units (MPUs): They are placed in the middle of the homepage. They move up and down and they are animated.

Skyscrapers and Wide Skyscrapers: They are placed left and right of a homepage.

Roadblocks: There are ads for the product within the leaderboard banner, the MPU, and both skyscrapers.

The first type –display advertising- is the most traditional yet really effective type of digital advertising. They contain pictures and text and they appear as banners, landing pages, pop-ups and flash advertisements. They can be a great way to increase awareness, especially for businesses in tourism with simple, eye-catching interactions that maintain a presence with travelers. A great example that adopted digital display ads is http://www.beaufortsc.org/ (Visit Beaufort – Port Royal, Sea Islands). They ran a campaign for the summer 2020, intending to drive high-level awareness, while also enticing potential travelers to directly click to Visit Beaufort's partner websites.

Pop-up ad and pop-under ads have shown increased usage rates. These ads are also called "annoying" and cause intense discomfort to the browser. Pop-up advertising is an automatic launch of new browser windows that contains an ad when the user enters or exits a page and it is slow to appear. A submerged ad is an ad that appears under or behind the current browser window that the user sees when the browser window closes. These types of ads have been heavily challenged as they are considered intrusive. Interstitial is a format of pop-up ad that refers to a page or frame that appears when the link is clicked by the user. These ads remain on the screen for as long as the content is loaded. These frames pop up on the computer screen in the same way as advertisements appear on TV. It is worth noting that there are programs that can prevent the appearance of all the above-mentioned types of ads that are displayed without the user's permission.

6.4.2 Social Media Advertising

Social media ads utilize social networks such as Facebook and Instagram to deliver paid ads to your target audience. Social media ads are an effective way to create awareness, brand image, and connect with your consumers, and boost your marketing campaigns. Social media marketing is an increasingly significant part of digital marketing, as more users join social media platforms and are spending increasingly longer periods of time socializing on those platforms. (Heinze, Fletcher, Rashid & Cruz, 2021). Social media supports the so-called interactive marketing where the users and business interact with each other and have an active role. Social media ads are one of the fastest and most efficient ways to connect with your target group. These ads provide your business with plenty of lucrative capabilities and have been proven an excellent way to successfully run digital marketing campaigns. This type of advertisements utilizes the information of the several social media users and their behavior online offering ads with personalized and engaging content. There are plenty of alternatives to choose from such as the following:

- Facebook Ads
- Instagram Ads
- Twitter Ads
- YouTube Ads

- TikTok Ads
- Pinterest Ads
- LinkedIn Ads

There is no definite appropriate platform. All social media platforms above offer different benefits according to the audience you wish to reach and the goals you set for your brand. For the majority of businesses, the use of social media platforms is a great means to create awareness and brand image. For others, it is just something to assist their publicity and sales. By integrating social media advertising into their digital marketing strategy, businesses can create a brand image and drive more traffic to their website (Diamond, 2019).

The three main key points you need in order to choose the right media platform/platforms for your audience are the following:

- Audience identification: The first and foremost is the identification of your audience. The more targeted it is, the easiest will be for you to reach a conclusion.
- Goals definition: After you target the audience, you have to target your goals for them. The main point to attract new customers and enrich your sales after all. How do you want the social media platform to work for your customers? Provide support and build a strong CRM strategy to keep your customers satisfied.
- Use demographics to find your audience to target: Which social media platform does my audience uses the most? Are they active on this platform? If you give answers to this question, it will be easy to reach a consensus.

Facebook, for example, is a platform in which the users build relationships, engage with each other and keep contact with all friends. For a brand-new business, it may not be the best choice since there are many closed networks the posts have small-scale reach. Twitter is a great choice to build brand awareness since you get the choice of the hashtag. Through hashtag searching, you may draw a big audience talking and “tweeting” about your brand. As for Pinterest you need really strong visual content as the users use “pinning boards” for pictures and ideas they love. YouTube is a giant search engine platform and you can post videos to reach a wider audience of all backgrounds. Instagram appeals to younger audiences and relies on strong video contents. It’s a great solution for a hotel business, food and beverage and beauty.

LinkedIn, on the other hand, is mostly used by an older and more business-oriented audience. Overall, if you make a profile of the audience, you want and set the goals for them you will make the right choice.

6.4.3 Search Engine Advertising

Search engine advertising also referred to as search advertising, online search advertising, pay per click marketing, internet search advertising, paid search advertising or keyword advertising, is a very big part of search engine marketing (SEM). Search engine advertising is an online advertising method where text or image ads are prioritized on search results of search engines like Google and Bing. The most common type is the paid search ads on Google. Paid search advertising aims at leading the person viewing an ad to click through to the advertiser's website where they can complete an action, such as booking a hotel room. It is a potential way of buying visits to your website as opposed to earning those visits organically. It usually appears at the top of the search results for relevant terms on search engines like Google and Bing. A paid search ad is a text, image or video advertisement, usually consisting of a headline, description, and a link to the destination URL. A great example of a hotel unit using paid search advertising is Catsletroy Park Suites (see https://www.castletroypark.ie/rooms/castletroy-park-suites/).

When people use specific keywords in order to search for something they wish to buy, then these ads are the first thing they see. If you target consumers who already know what they want and they search specifically for certain keywords then this type of ad will work pretty well for your business. Google Ads is the most common place to create pay-per-click ads.

The principles of the process of SEA consist of the following:

- Define specific relevant keywords for your business. If you identify the right keywords for your business the interested audience will reach you very easily.
- Define your budget. It is important to decide on how much you want to pay each time a user clicks on your ad.

- The information you provide must be accurate and reliable and match the information on your website.

6.4.4 Video Advertisements

Video advertisements are a very common and cost-efficient type of digital advertising. They are promotional videos and appear before watching other videos on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram etc. The challenge of this type of digital ad is the fact that the video needs to be carefully created and designed to catch the viewer's attention. Make sure also that the visible content makes sense also without sound since a lot of users are not able to listen the whole time. Successful video advertisement has been embraced by Hilton, Pulitzer Barcelona, Marriott and many more. The storytelling technique is adopted to create engaging content and an authentic experience for the viewer (see https://www.amara-marketing.com/).

Video advertising is becoming more and more popular and a powerful tool for businesses. Video advertisements are displayed on the customers' devices such as mobile phones, tablets, laptops and PCs. The content of this ad aims to generate interest to potential customers. The promotional content plays before, during or even after streaming content. Mobile phones offer great opportunities for video advertising since the mobile video banner expands when you click it. In contrast with the desktop advertising, which is muted by default, the mobile video advertisement plays straight away providing a livelier experience. Online video advertising is one of the best practices that generates traffic and brand awareness. The most current and popular trends are:

- Short video ads under 15 seconds.
- Over the top (OTT) advertisements: Distribution of streaming media on the Internet.
- Mobile-first advertising on smartphones.
- "Shoppable" Instagram Stories.
- Cinemographs: Hybrid format of photo and video combined, entailing idle motion while the picture is stable.
- User generated content.
- Facebook in-stream ads.

6.4.5 Text Advertisements

A text ad is a type of marketing communication that the advertiser uses in order to advertise their product online. Even though video advertising campaigns on platforms such as YouTube and Facebook are incredibly popular nowadays, no one can underestimate the value of text ads online. The basic text ads that appear online has the following three (3) components:

1) A headline: You can have up to three headlines which appear next to each other, max. 30 characters each. Don't forget that they need to be catchy since they are the first thing the user sees.

2) Description: In the description section you can add any relevant information and details related to your company's services and products.

3) Display URL: This is the link to your website. There is another optional field where you can name to your landing page URL so that people understand what it is about.

A very interested example is the "unadvertise" campaign of the Small Luxury Hotels of the world (SLH), who promote text over pictures. See the campaign below: https://campaignsoftheworld.com/print/unadvertise-by-the-small-luxury-hotels-of-the-world/.

6.4.6 Audio Advertising

Audio advertising is a type that allows marketers to target customers with recorded advertisements that trigger between songs on websites such as Spotify and Pandora or even on the internet radio. Users can typically opt out of the advertisements by purchasing a subscription to the streaming service. An example of a hotel using an audio ad is the Limelite Hotel. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1Qd2NmQ7Hg)

6.4.7 E-mail Advertising

E-mail ad is a type of paid communication that is added to e-mails or newsletters in order to drive more revenue. They are a way to monetize subscriber list of a business. Tourism and hospitality businesses can advertise their goods and services in e-mails sent to subscribers by many organizations. For example, hotels or car rental

companies may advertise in the newsletters of airlines sent to their subscribers. Conversely, hotels can also feature advertisements of other businesses in their e-mails sent to their subscribers.

6.4.8 Native Advertising

Native advertising is a form of paid advertising in which the ads are very much related to the digital platform they appear. They fit “natively” on the web page. As far as native advertisements are concerned, they work similarly to display advertisements. However, they are more targeted and intentional and embodied into the feed. Native search ads take into account the behavior of customers when online and show ads that are relevant to them. The sub-types of native search ads are the in-feed ads, search ads, recommendation widgets and last but not least, the promoted listings. Native advertising is a form of advertising that uses the tools and language of editorial content, but promotes a brand or marketing message. The words “native advertising” is often used interchangeably with other terms, including branded content, sponsored posts, advertorials and other forms of branded content. “Go World Travel Magazine” is a characteristic example that embraces native advertising. (Go World Travel Magazine, 2020).

6.4.9 Mobile Advertising

A mobile ad is a type of ad that can appear on websites and apps that are viewed on a mobile device such as smartphones and tablets. In other words, it means advertisements that are shown on devices that have smaller screens. This type includes more sub-types such as call-only ads, app promotion ads, text ads and image apps. Mandarin Oriental is a characteristic example of a famous hotel brand that successfully uses mobile advertising. Their app (MO Hotels) enables users to make and modify reservations, see property details for each of its locations using an interactive 3D globe view, and view local city guides at the same time. The app also shows local deals and offers mobile concierge service for things like booking hotel spa appointments and restaurant reservations (https://www.mandarinoriental.com/).

6.4.10 Retargeting (Remarketing)

Retargeting or remarketing is a specific type of display adverting that targets users who have previously interacted with the website. It uses cookies to identify users who have visited the website previously and shows them display ads for the brand and products/ services they were interested before to reignite their interest and encourage them to return, and potentially finalize a purchase. It's widely accepted that only 2% of shoppers complete a purchase during their first visit to an online website. Retargeting aims to bring back the other 98% of viewers to capture a higher percentage of sales (https://hoteltechreport.com/news/retargeting)

The whole strategy starts with the definition of the audience you wish to remarket. You can create segmented and differentiated lists of your visitors and potential users and make new remarketing lists. This way different ads are shown to different audience. They key elements for effective content segmentation to remarket your audience consist of the following:

- Use psychographic insight according to your customers actions, personal traits, interests, activities, preferences,
- Use location- based information, according to where your customers may be,
- Use demographic information like gender, income, age, race, professional status, family, religion, language, culture,
- Use behavioral insight to define their needs and attitudes towards your products or services.

6.4.11 Affiliate Marketing

Affiliate marketing is a type of digital advertising where publishers or online platforms and websites earn a commission by promoting a product or service of advertiser using an affiliate link. Affiliate marketing is a practical way to attract more people to a business website. "Affiliate marketing is web-based marketing practice in which a business rewards one or more affiliates for each visitor or customers brought about by the affiliate's marketing efforts. Along with the financial services, retail and mobile phones, the travel sector is one of the major spenders of affiliate marketing" (Middleton et al., 2009). Affiliates are websites that receive a commission for a

purchase or a registration. An affiliate visit can best be compared to referred traffic, with one significant difference. Referred traffic often has link building as a primary goal, so that a better score is achieved in the search results. Affiliate marketing is primarily concerned with conversion, e.g., a notification or a purchase. Affiliate sites often present themselves as a 'friend' of the visitor, as a critical comparison site, but actually earn their money from a commission from the sites to which they refer visitors (Visser, Sikkenga & Berry, 2021, p. 543).

Affiliate marketing is a commission-based arrangement where the merchant only pays when they make the sale or get a lead. It may not be 'suitable though for business products or lower-priced consumer products since it will not be sufficiently profitable for the affiliates, and it may be difficult to recruit sufficient affiliates' (Chaffey, 2017, p.419)

Affiliate Marketing can be utilized by both businesses that want to advertise themselves as well as by users who maintain a popular website and want to use it for profit. There are two main aspects to this type of marketing:

- Merchant or Advertiser
- Affiliate/ Publisher

The Affiliate intends to encourage visitors to visit the advertiser's website and gets paid if the visitor makes a pre-agreed action (usually a purchase) - this is called 'Cost Per Action' (CPA). The partner's payment may be a percentage of the sale value or a specific amount for each transaction (e.g., newsletter subscription). Examples of pages that may serve as affiliates are:

- site with information about a topic,
- websites that compare prices such as www.trivago.com,
- blogs,
- forums, etc.

6.4.12 Paid Influencer Marketing

Paid influencer marketing is a type digital advertising that makes use of endorsements and products mentioned by influencers. Influencers, as the word itself reveals, influence public opinion toward an issue. When it comes to products and

services, you can utilize influencers in order to drive more traffic to your website and boost your sales. This works something like a proof that your product or service is of good quality and serves the customers well. Influencer marketing made its strong presence particularly on Instagram but there are also other websites like YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat and TikTok where companies tend to hire influencers to advertise or simply talk and mention their products and services.

The two main reasons to begin a paid influencer marketing strategy are 1) to generate brand awareness and 2) boost your sales. Another goal you have to set, though, is to decide on your brand's need. For instance, you may want to target younger audience or introduce a new product and make influencers talk about it. You have to choose the right influencers as each one has gained popularity in different audiences. They have the ability to reach specific audiences and secure a positive result for your brand.

How do you find the influencer you wish and what do you pay them? In contrast with the automatic advertising campaigns, influencers are human beings and thus it is important to develop real relationships with them and cultivate reliability and develop trustworthy relationship. They have to handle further partnerships with other brands at the same time, so you have to stand out. A great tool to find and identify potential influencers is through Twitter Analytics. The time for planning, running and evaluating your influencer marketing strategy needs to be taken into consideration and careful monitoring and follow up is vital. The last key feature of such a campaign involves measuring the success of influencer marketing. In order to do that you can create specified hashtags and checkout how frequently they are mentioned. Paid influencer marketing is a very new form of marketing strategies and has been proven to have a big impact particularly on specific platforms. The success in paid influencer marketing may depend on the nature of businesses and products, but with a careful monitoring and cautious selection of influencers, the positive results are guaranteed.

Recently, Marriot Hotels created a campaign around its Moxy brand, working closely with comedian Taryn Southern. Together, they produced a series of "Do Not Disturb" videos that have made the social media rounds and put Moxy on the map with their Snapchat followers. You can find the video below: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6Z-Amvr4dE.

6.5 Managing Digital Advertising Campaigns in Google Ads

Both big advertisers and smaller ones use Google Ads for digital Advertising. Google Ads is designed to please the majority of businesses. It is user-friendly and really efficient. Below are the procedures for using Google Ads.

- First create your Google Account

In case you don't have "Gmail", create an account as it is required to create a Google Ads account. The setup of the Google Ads account requires that you enter your email account and website URL. Then you are asked to create a live campaign. If you don't feel ready for that, go back to this step later on. There are many fields you need to fill in and they are detailed below:

- Daily Budget: Budgets are always set up at a daily level.
- Locations: In this filed you need to choose the location you want to target (country or region).
- Network: Choose search network.
- Keywords: Enter keywords that you created.
- Bids: For a start, you can enter 0.01$. This field actually asks you to enter your maximum bid. Of course, the budget ranges from business to business but 1.50$ is recommended. Google ads notify you if the bid is too high or low and you can make changes accordingly.
- Text ad: Create an ad message according to the character limits and restrictions.
- Save and continue.
- The billing section is next. You will later on have to select a **payment method.**

This includes the following:

1) Automatic Payments: Automatically taking money out of your account when you reach the deadline (usually 30 days). This has a big advantage in case you are forgetful!
2) Manual Payments: If you are a super-organized person and able to control all your responsibilities then manually add your budget and Google will deduct from it every time someone clicks on your ad. When you finish up your budget, the advertisement stops.

Be sure to select the correct **Time Zone** too. When you set it, it can't be changed. The daily reports will be according to the time zone you set, so make sure you choose the most appropriate one.

Then it is the **User Access**. Click the little gear icon on the top right-hand corner of the page and from there select Account Settings, if you want to give access to other people to your campaign. You can have several access levels and give them various permissions. The architecture of your advertising campaign is of the utmost significance. The campaign and strategy have to be consistent. The structure is as follows:

1. **Campaign**
2. **Ad groups**
3. **Keywords**

Campaigns are above everything and all the budgeting is done here. You decide the language, your location, your daily septs etc. Within this campaign you have targeted users and they should be labeled with single themes. Then, the keywords within each ad group are strongly linked to the themes of each group. 10-12 keywords are recommended for each group.

Important notes:

- ✓ There are restrictions on special characters (!?*#), excessive punctuation, and capitalization.
- ✓ The word click is banned in ad copy. That means you cannot use a phrase such as "click here for more".
- ✓ The use of trademark terms in ad copy is restricted without prior authorization from the trademark owner.
- ✓ You cannot mislead or misrepresent the service or good that you provide.

When you go on Google Ads' Dashboard, click on the **tab "Campaigns**". Then choose Ads right underneath and click the **+ Ad** button at the bottom. You have to choose an ad group before you are ready to post your ad copy. Do not forget to fill in all the fields. It is advisable you create two or three ad groups. This way you can examine the reactions and preferences of your users. Even if you find the "perfect" ad

copy that works perfectly, do not stop checking it and make adjustments. Then you can even add ad extensions. This method encourages to choose anything they find more interesting according to their interests. It boosts your brands perception and estimation too.

Apart from that you can even App Download Extensions that allow the users to directly download the application of your site on their mobile devices.

The other tab you can find is the **Opportunities** tab which gives very useful piece of advice updated in real time according to your reporting data. This means that you can get different advice weekly.

Last but not least you have the **Tools** tab where you can find the Keyword Planner, Display Planner and Conversion Tracking. Conversation tracking can be implemented in two ways:

1. Place a Google Ads conversion tracking code on a page or something (an element) on your website to imply the success of your business. For example, a “find-out-more” button.
2. Set your goals and transactions in Google Analytics and put them into Google Ads.

Be sure you measure the statistics and data, import them to Google Ads and make adjustments to work for the best for your business.

6.6. Managing Digital Advertising in Social Media

All social media websites and applications have built in features to allow businesses to advertise their products online.

Facebook

On Facebook, advertisers are able to target their audience based on location, age, gender, language and other common demographic characteristics, though the most valuable possibility is to target the audience based on interests and behaviours. For example, a pet hotel company could target people interested in birds and intending to travel soon. Therefore, Facebook provides organisations with opportunities to reach exactly the right audience for their products or services. The advantages of advertising on Facebook and Instagram for small and medium sized tourism enterprises (SMTEs)

include more opportunities to increase brand awareness and reach of the message, increasing foot traffic to physical premises or increasing web traffic to the website. (Heinze, Fletcher, Rashid & Cruz, 2021)

Facebook is a powerful advertising tool because you can see what your audience likes, shares, and comments on. So, any ad that users see on the right-hand side of a Facebook stream is targeted specifically at them. You can divide your audience according to demographic, location, interests, behaviors, connections, and so on. Facebook ads will vary depending on where you want your ad to appear (location based) and the results you are after. Your ads can appear within the news feed or down the right-hand side. You can decide on the type of ad you will use depending on your objective. For example, you can use photo, video, or text for page post-engagement and links for website conversions.

Types of Ads on Facebook:

a) **Image ads**: the best way to start your Facebook advertising campaign. Create a post and give it a huge boost with a catchy picture.
b) **Video ads**: This can be a quick or longer demo of showing your brand's team on action. They can appear in the News Feed or Stories.
c) **Video poll ads (only for mobile)**: They incorporate an interactive component with several video polls. They increase brand awareness more efficiently according to Facebook's measurements.
d) **Carousel ads**: This kind of ad uses up to 10 pictures or videos to feature your product. You can point out the special characteristics of your product and you can even create a panorama.
e) **Slideshow ads**: Slideshow ads give you an easy way to make short video ads from a collection of photos, text, or existing video clips. If you don't have your own images, you can pick stock photos directly from Ads Manager.
f) **Collection ads**: They are paid advertisements, which are offered only for mobile devices and let you showcase five products that customers can click to buy.
g) **Instant experience ads**: They are a full-screen ad format that loads 15 times faster than a mobile website outside of Facebook.
h) **Lead ads**: They are only on mobile phones since they are designed to make it easy for people to give you their contact information without too much typing.

i) **Dynamic ads**: They promote specific products to targeted audience.
j) **Messenger ads**: Facebook Messenger ads give you access to the 1.3 billion people who use Messenger every month. When creating your ad, simply choose Messenger as the desired placement. You also need to select Facebook feed.
k) **Stories ads**: Stories ads are a full-screen vertical video format that allow you to maximize screen real estate without expecting viewers to turn the screen.
l) **Stories augmented reality ads**: Augmented reality advertisements allow people to interact with your brand and use filters and animation.
m) **Playable ads**: It incorporates interactivity. You create a game scenario and people interact with your creative and imaginative content.

In order to start an advertising campaign and manage your campaign you can utilize Meta Business Suite of Facebook. With this tool you can view and modify your campaigns, create ad sets or Facebook ads and monitor their results.

Meta Business Suite is the place where a business or an individual can manage and run everything on their Facebook, Instagram and Messenger advertising campaigns. Meta Business Suite offers the business plenty opportunities and capabilities. Facebook ad can be set up, new ads can be created, bids can be managed and optimization setting for your campaign can be applied. You manage your own bids and check every little detail keeping a close eye on your advertising campaign. The basic structure of Facebook Campaigns has got three levels:

1) Campaign
2) Ad set
3) Ad

In order to set up your campaign on Meta Business Suite first access your Meta Business Suite account. The steps to start and create a new campaign are the following:

- Go on the Campaigns tab and then click on +Create. In this stage you have to set some really essential information about your campaign.
- Secondly, as in any other advertising campaign, your company's goals need to be clearly defined. Facebook has a long list of objectives you can choose from such as brand awareness, local awareness, traffic, engagement, app installs, conversions, lead generation, product catalog sales, messages, store traffic,

and video views. The careful choice and definition of your company's objectives of utmost importance since Meta Business Suite combines them with other key factors to optimize your ad campaign.

- Target your audience. The targeting of your audience is as important as the setting of your goals. You can create a new Facebook target audience or use a saved audience. When you create a new audience, you define details of the group such as gender, locations, ages, languages and add even demographics, interests, attitudes and behaviors.
- Give your campaign a name. Giving an accurate and clear name to your advertising campaign is important since it helps you organize your campaigns. When you reach the stage of reporting and analyzing results an accurate name convention will be proven really efficient.
- Setting up the ad placement. In general, Meta Business Suite has the default placements which is a list of several places from Facebook Feed to Sponsored Messages on Messenger. The complete list of placements on Meta Business Suite is:
    - Facebook
        - Feed
        - Instant Articles
        - In-stream Videos
        - Right column
        - Marketplace
        - Stories
    - Instagram
        - Feed
        - Stories
    - Audience Network
        - Native, Banner and interstitial
        - In-stream videos
        - Rewarded videos
    - Messenger
        - Inbox
        - Sponsored Messages

- The next step to run your campaign is to choose your ad budget and check the several bidding options you have. You can set a daily budget or a lifetime one. It is important not to forget the fact that after the campaign is launched you can't change the type of budget you chose.
- The final step of your campaign's creating is the format of ad the users will see. You can select the preferred Facebook ad format you wish or else you insert your own images.

Website and applications of social media are updated very frequently, so in order to see current steps for creating an advertisement campaign on Facebook and Instagram through Meta Business Suite please go to https://www.facebook.com/business/help/1459553357539014?id=916550222172854.

Twitter

On Twitter, advertisers can target their audience based on common demographic characteristics such as location, age, gender and language. The most valuable and significant feature of targeting on Twitter is an opportunity to target the audience based on their networks. Twitter native advertising, where content appears as if it is just another message from a user, has the highest engagement rate when it is relevant to the buyer persona (Heinze, Fletcher, Rashid & Cruz, 2021).

Working on Twitter is a great opportunity since it is both a promotional tool and a great network at the same time. Advertising on Twitter can help you to reach users on mobile devices, because 65 percent of Twitter's ad revenue is from mobile tablets or smartphones. Ads are shown as what are called promoted tweets—so if users search for airbnb's, promoted tweets from Airbnb will appear in their feeds. Twitter uses similar targeting as Facebook (location, interests, followers, etc.) to ensure that promoted tweets are directed to the most targeted users. Your ad can be discovered by the audience that you select, and you only pay when people follow your account, retweet a message of yours, or move on to an action as a result of your ad. Twitter campaign needs a really careful planning and design. You need specified goals and your tweets should be accurate. You got 240 characters, thus your message to your audience should be brief and clear. Basic steps for creating Twitter Ads account and starting and executing an ads campaign can be found on https://business.twitter.com/en/help/account-setup/ads-account-creation.html

YouTube

YouTube is a social platform that has had explosive growth in the last thirteen years. It was launched in 2005 and has become the top website for online videos. YouTube advertising is simple and businesses can do it pretty fast without requiring any professional/ technical skills. However, some marketers forget that a YouTube advertising campaign is as important as Facebook or Twitter ads. By using YouTube ad campaign, businesses create not only awareness about their products and services but also improves their brand visibility. The cost is differentiated and they generate different implications for your brands. The advertising service offered by YouTube is flexible and allows businesses to create a customized ad campaign. Furthermore, users or businesses have the opportunity to select a particular type of ad format to roll their ads during the video playback. Each ad format is somewhat different from others but the ultimate objective remains the same, which is to make the viewer aware of the product or service of the business and generate leads.

Advertising on YouTube provides several options and ad formats you can choose from. So, after you decide on your goal and set your objectives you have the following options:

- Home-page advertisements: This is an advertisement with a premiere spot-on YouTube's homepage.
- TrueView Videos ads: The users have the option to click on "Skip This Ad Now" after five seconds. It's almost before every video on YouTube and it is becoming more and more popular.
- Brand channel: In this case you get several levels of customization. You can make adjustments on the look of your page, what kind of videos are promoted and how you engage the users. This is not like the user's channel that can be created in the beginning as you sign up on YouTube.
- Mobile: The advertisements are offered also on smartphones (iPhones and Androids)

The so- called TrueView Ads have the following formats:

1) In- Stream
2) In-Display
3) Discovery Ads

The TrueView Ads can be further classified into two types that are in-stream and in-display advertisements. Talking about the in-display or discovery ads, these ads are usually shown either on YouTube's homepage or within the search results. In addition, in-display ads also get served in the related videos section. One important thing to notice about in-display or discovery ads is that a view is registered only when someone clicks the ad to see the promotional video. The in-stream ads differ from the in-display ads in the way that these ads pop up before the video the viewer has selected, starts playing. In-stream ads can be skipped and the YouTube guidelines recommend their duration to be in between 12 seconds and 6 minutes. Usually, viewers can skip in-stream ad videos after watching them for 5 seconds. The advertising fee is charged from the advertiser only when the user views the advertisement for at least 30 seconds or interacts with the video by clicking on the call-to-action.

Here are the basic steps required for initializing a video advertisement campaign on YouTube:

1. **Upload your video**

First of all, you should upload a video that will function as the ad video and will be the promotional tool of your product. Go on **YouTube Studio**, which is located through the profile icon on the upper left corner of YouTube.

2. **Create an Account on Google Ads**

This is Google's official advertising platform. Sign in and start shaping your campaign, filling in the required fields.

3. **Set you Campaign** (**Campaign Settings**)

The six (6) different campaign options are: Search, Display, Shopping, Video, Applications and Smart. As for YouTube, choose **Video campaign** in order to promote your videos. Do not forget to set the **language, budget, duration, location.** The location is of the utmost importance since it determines the region of your service and targets your audience.

4. **Ad Group Settings**

The selection of the target audience is one of the major factors that decide the success of the ad campaign. Without going further into the minute details, there are a lot of options to customize within the ad group settings that include demographics, audiences, and keywords.

5. Ready to Start

After setting up the YouTube video advertisement campaign successfully, the video provided by the user will be promoted on YouTube. The ad video will be served to the viewers that have been prioritized in the campaign settings. YouTube provides powerful reporting tools which will provide important data about the reach of the campaign, the number of leads acquired (using Google Analytics), the percentage of video watched in average and many more metrics that you can use to make adjustments.

The benefits from using YouTube ad campaigns are countless. First of all, you gain visibility for your brand. Your video will be seen everywhere by everyone. You extend your branding to your videos straight away. You build brand recognition by placing your logo and other elements that distinguish your company. When promoting on YouTube you need to have a customized channel which is essential for your brands' recognition. A channel allows you to create a profile for yourself and have a place to link your website. Do not forget to share your channel's link on other social media.

The content of your videos on YouTube should be customized. Create videos or spots that match the identity of your company and the style of YouTube. The average length of a video on YouTube is four minutes and 20 seconds. The videos you create should not last longer. The category you put your clip in is also important. The first step about it is to start by checking out how popular videos in your category have been tagged. After that you can adopt these tags and use them for your own video clip. You can add as many tags as you want since there is not a limit.

Viral seeding (Diamond, 2019) is a really important feature of YouTube. Viral seeding refers to sharing your video in a very targeted and specified way in order to increase its shareability. There are several elements included in viral seeding:

1) Targeting influencers: Influencers are people who influence other in a category and you may manage to get them talking about your video.
2) Email the video to popular lists.
3) Create videos about deep, universal human truths and let people relate to your video.
4) Blogging: Use your video link in a blogging process. Bloggers talk and share links in their posts.

Further information about creating a Google Ads account and setting up a campaign can be found on https://www.youtube.com/intl/en_us/ads/?subid=ww-en-ha-yt-bk-c-plt!o3~CjwKCAjwzNOaBhAcEiwAD7Tb6OflpR7QO3eV4CEz2KCtyWZYHJSq1x5H6sQ1Jk8sCGMgMQQrEVYxBhoCDPUQAvD_BwE~%7badgroup%7d~kwd-357555722372~17346944849~600560782752&gclid=CjwKCAjwzNOaBhAcEiwAD7Tb6OflpR7QO3eV4CEz2KCtyWZYHJSq1x5H6sQ1Jk8sCGMgMQQrEVYxBhoCDPUQAvD_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds

LinkedIn

The audience of LinkedIn is more professional and business-oriented. It is the world's largest professional network and the users seem to have a stronger buying power that the average audience. "LinkedIn is a social networking service for building and maintaining a professional network. Therefore, it is regarded as an important social media marketing channel in B2B, despite low popularity with the general public. The growing worldwide audience of LinkedIn offers a breadth of options for SMEs" (Heinze, Fletcher, Rashid & Cruz, 2021). The marketers can apply advanced settings and filters and target their audience really carefully. The advertising process is objective-based and the business owners and entrepreneur can run their campaign having everything under control. Your brand gets more recognition among professionals and recruiters.

LinkedIn has different ad formats including the following:

- Sponsored Ads: Sponsored advertisements can be single images, videos or even carousel. In the case your aim at raising the engagement of your audience this ad format is a great solution.
- Direct Sponsored Content: These advertisements are not published on your LinkedIn page but you can use them to make adjustments and target your audience even better.
- Sponsored InMail: This type of ad gives the marketer the ability to send messages to the users' inboxes.
- Text Ads: LinkedIn Text ads can be shown in the top banner or in the right rail. They can entail brief headlines or small images. They can be measured by per-per-click.
- Dynamic ads: This type targets the viewer by mentioning their name and showing their profile picture itself.

Display advertisements do not exist on LinkedIn anymore. The key elements for a successful LinkedIn advertisement can be included in the following bullets:

- Define the right audience according to your goals. The campaign will be successful only if the audience is carefully targeted and identified. There are many functions and settings to help you define your audience based on features like location, gender, age, educational background, job titles, interests and so on. LinkedIn Demographics is a very helpful tool for this. There is also the option of Audience Expansion in the case you wish to reach wider awareness.
- The content of your promotional message should be short to prevent your customer from scrolling past.
- The content of your promotional message should be clear.
- Use keywords like “join, register, download, try” to engage LinkedIn users
- Try to be direct and personal in order to build a good CRM

In order to create your advertising campaign on LinkedIn, the procedure is the following:

1. **Sign in to Campaign Manager**: Campaign Manager is the advertising platform on LinkedIn. After you created your free account, the platform itself gives you instructions for each next step.
2. **Choose your objective**: This is the action you wish your audience to take upon when they see your ad. Selection your objective helps show ad formats, traits and bid-types that assist your objective during campaign creation.
3. **Choose your audience**: After setting your goals and objectives you are guided by Campaign Manager to save the features of your audience. You can target with professional traits—such as job title, company name, and industry type, target by professional or personal interests, or customize by bringing in your own data using Matched Audiences—which includes retargeting, email contact targeting, and account-based targeting.
4. **Choose an ad format**: This step is right after you choose your audience. You’ll be asked to choose an ad format for your campaign. Depending on your objective, you can select from the various sponsored content formats

(single-image, carousel or videos ads in the LinkedIn feed), Message Ads (ads that show up in LinkedIn messages), or Text Ads.

5. **Set your budget**: The fifth step is about setting your initial budget. This will help you automate and control your costs.
6. **Set up your ad creative**: As you create Sponsored Content and Text Ads, Campaign Manager will generate previews in different sizes and environments, so you can see what they'll look like. For Message Ads, you can send yourself a test message to preview.
7. **Save your payment details**: This is the final step before launching your campaign. Enter a debit or credit card, save the information and your campaign will enter a review process before it is finally launched.

More up to date information about setting up and executing a LinkedIn advertising campaign can be found on https://business.linkedin.com/marketing-solutions/success/best-practices/create-your-first-campaign.

6.7 Components of Effective Digital Adverting

Digital marketing seems to be more effective and efficient than the traditional form due to the following factors:

- ✓ It enables businesses to share large quantities of information and data with potential users at low cost.
- ✓ The marketing budget can be purposefully assigned given the fact that it is easily measurable.

As a result of the growing number of possibilities regarding digitalization and interactivity that the internet facilitates, a number of marketers' dreams have become reality. When used wisely, the internet makes marketing more effective: marketing objectives can be met with less effort. Because the internet allows customer's individual data to be saved, and communications have become increasingly 'personalized'. The profile of the individual customer is recognized; thus, they receive a 'personalized offer', an individual proposition. That way a travel agency can offer a customer, who is recognized in their database as someone who likes to take his/her children to a theme park, a last-minute deal for Disneyland Paris. (Visser, Sakkenga & Berry, 2021, p.15).

According to Chaffey and Ellis Chadwick' 5S model (2019), there are five crucial objectives of digital marketing communication which are briefly reviewed below.

1. Sell: Increasing sales by accessing new target markets or developing new engaging products.
2. Speak: Initiatives for better and more efficient communications with potential customers.
3. Serve: Customer service should be present and efficient to keep the customers satisfied.
4. Save: Use social media for cost reduction and wider audience reach
5. Sizzle: Initiatives to support your brand and business.

The four Ps of the marketing mix **P**roduct, **P**lace, **P**rice and **P**romotion are immensely supported by the use of Internet and the users are provided with information they need anytime anywhere. Businesses should not forget that digital marketing is a continuous cycle and its success depends on the connection of the following components (Kotler and Keller, 2016):

- ✓ **Market sensing**: Market sensing refers to a process that keeps organizations and businesses up to date and informed about the current trends and market needs.
- ✓ **Product realization**: This process refers to the development of new core products, lines of products and services, extending the market supply and the launch of products
- ✓ **Customer acquisition:** This process is about defining and segmenting the target markets as well as reaching a wider audience and boosting brand awareness.
- ✓ **Order fulfillment processing:** This process is about receiving and approving orders or confirming bookings, shipping the ordered goods on time and conducting payments. In other words, this is all about keeping your promises to meet up with your audience's expectations.
- ✓ **Customer relationship management (CRM):** This is about building an efficient communication between the business and your customers. It takes deeper understanding, stronger relationships and personalized offers for individual customers.

As far as digital advertising itself is concerned, the content that is presented to the viewers should meet the following criteria:

- ✓ authentic
- ✓ consistent
- ✓ comprehensible
- ✓ targeted
- ✓ interactive
- ✓ shareable
- ✓ accessible

The so- called AIDA model can be utilized for setting up efficient digital adverting campaigns (Visser, Sikkenga & Berry, 2021, p. 208):

- ➢ search terms (Attention)
- ➢ advertisements (Interest)
- ➢ landing pages (Desire)
- ➢ call to action/CTA (Action)

The above mentioned are the four (4) most important components for effective digital advertising. Attention is achieved by the results presented to the potential customer. The advertisements they see and may click on, generate interest to one or more suppliers. After clicking on the ad, they are transferred to the landing page. Suppose the search engine user clicks on one of the advertisements and views the advertiser's offer on their screen. The landing page they are taken answers explain the benefits and advantages of the product offered (if it's been well built and the traffic is well targeted). This means that the landing page and its content can create desire. Then, every product that is offered is accompanied by a 'call to action'. For example, the possibility to order, request more information, reserve or book etc. By clicking on the ordering/ booking button, the product is placed in the shopping basket or the serviced is reserved. Then, the purchase can actually be completed (action).

Ongoing test and optimization are required for every action and advertising campaign on a product basis. Ad content should be differentiated and creative. "Because of their relevance, it is important to incorporate your targeted keywords in the ad creatives. What makes your content different? Highlight your unique selling

points (USPs). Continuously run three or four variations of ads and learn what makes the better-performing ads more appealing to your buyer persona. As for the landing pages, they have to be optimized for organic on-page SEO for the related search term. Using data from Google Analytics, regularly review whether the content of the page follows the AIDA model and offers the user what they were hoping for when they clicked on the ad. User experience testing can help to refine these landing pages. Last but not least, campaign review and optimization are essential to monitor the crucial points of your advertising campaign. It is a structured approach to reviewing an existing campaign and improving the paid search advertising results. The review should take into account paid search marketing performance in relation to other channels, relative performance to historic time period, competitor activity, etc. These reviews can take place on a weekly or – if needed – daily basis, especially at the critical points of a campaign. Learn through this data about your buyer persona behavior and, if necessary, share the results to inform activities on other channels" (Heinze, Fletcher, Rashid & Cruz, 2021).

6.8 Monitoring Key Performance Indicators (KPI) in Digital Advertising

The key performance indicators are utilized as a metric to see if your campaign is going well. They work as guideposts for your campaign and provide you with quantitative data about your company's objectives. Different ads campaigns may have different KPIs and different metrics can be used at different stages of a campaign.

When your campaign's primary goal is to raise awareness, you target a broader audience. In this case, Cost Per Mille (CPM)/Cost Per Thousand is a great solution. It refers to the term of the cost the marketer pays per one thousand impressions on the Internet. The impression is a way of measuring the number of views an advertisement receives. CPM is considered as the most popular method for pricing online advertisements. Another KPI is the Click Though Rate (CTR). It is a metric to show the advertiser if the ad was clicked. It shows the percentage of people who viewed the ad and then engaged. It is used in combination with CPM for more reliable results. When your advertisements are placed in a ranked list, the KPI of positioning may be proven particularly helpful. The higher on the list an ad is, the more chances you get increase in awareness and thus traffic to your website.

After awareness comes the engagement. Your aim is to drive more traffic to your website and increase your sales. In this case, you may as well consider the Cost Per Click (CPC). In Cost Per Click the marketer pays every time a viewer clicks on the advertisement. Cost Per Click provides vital knowledge about the effectiveness of an advertising campaign. The lower the Cost Per Click, the more successful the advertisement. It is mainly used by marketers who have set a daily budget and when it is reached, the advertisement is removed.

Cost Per Action (CPA) refers to another conversion pricing model in which the advertiser pays media sources an amount of money based on actions their audience take. This metric is the one mainly used for conversion campaigns. No matter what goals you have set and hope for your advertising campaign, checking out the number of conversions you get is always helpful. This way, the advertiser identifies the strengths and weaknesses and see what is really functioning for each campaign. The Conversion Rate (CvR) is a tool that provides the company with valuable insight and knowledge in order to make new adjustments or use this valuable information for future advertising campaigns.

Some of the tools to help with a number of paid advertising benchmarking efforts, together are the following (Heinze, Fletcher, Rashid & Cruz, 2021).

- "Google Analytics – offers a free powerful tool for tracking paid activities related to a website. Using the free URL builder allows an extension of Google Analytics where each campaign can be specifically tracked even by the smallest organization, without the need for an external software budget. It integrates particularly well with Google Ads, where a paid search ad click can be tracked in terms of its conversions and revenue for e-commerce websites.
- Keyword Spy – offers an overview of the average cost being paid for a keyword by some of your competitors targeting the same market. This tool offers some free information and, for a premium, more advanced analytics on paid advertising performance.
- Word Stream – this advanced tool brings all your paid advertising accounts from Google Ads, Bing and Facebook into one place and offers paid advertising grading reports and landing page grading, as well as advice on how to optimize your efforts.

- Social Flow – allows for managing and reporting on multiple social media platforms such as Facebook, Pinterest and Twitter campaigns."

6.9 Conclusion

Digitalization has had a huge impact on the way advertisers create and show their advertising content. The conventional methods and tools which were used in the past seem to fade as times passes. The constant need of people to be online, search for products on the Internet and stay connected has led advertisers to utilize the Internet more and more. The expenditure on digital advertising is rising and more businesses tend to invest on it to reach wider audiences, generate brand interest and loyalty, raise awareness and eventually increase the sales.

Social networks have become a tremendously useful tool for SMTEs since they are cost-efficient places to reach the masses. Depending on their target market, businesses use the appropriate social media platform to help them reach their marketing goals successfully. The advertising contents need engaging features to catch the eye of the viewer and an emotional targeting should be followed to create a more authentic experience.

Digital advertising needs careful and stable moves in order to be successful. The numerous advantages it offers can be turned into big disadvantages really fast if the services and products offered do not meet the needs of customers and dissatisfy them. Careful monitoring of the metrics and analytics related to the advertising campaign should be implemented. The adoption of KPIs will help businesses determine the performance of their campaign and make adjustments if needed.

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Supplementary Resources

- “The Future of Advertising- Four scenarios” see link below: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P2tLH6T3B3I
- What is SEO? | Search Engine Optimization Explained” see link below: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sd0ypO9MTWY
- “Digital Ad Formats: What Mobile Ad Formats Have to Offer” see link below: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBSUovzcsXY
- “What is SEO Search Engine Optimization in 2 minutes” see link below: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNGTHx3QStU
- “What is social media marketing in 2 minutes” see link below: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9m45nVsvvEY

Assessment Questions

1) Which of the following is **not** an accurate description of digital advertising?

a. Digital advertising is a one-way message used by companies to promote their product and service

b. Digital advertising is a part of marketing communication

c. Digital advertising is also called search engine marketing

d. Digital advertising uses display ads, emails, apps, SEM and paid social ads

2) Which of the following is **not** a type of an online ad format?

A. display ad

B. video

C. real-time bidding

D. email

E. remarketing ad

3) Online advertising can be defined as a process whereby a customer's attention is gained, followed by _____

a) purchasing b) advertising c) **learning** d) responding

4) "Shoppable" Instagram stories and Cinemagraphs are a current trend on _____

a) Pay-per click advertisements b) Programmatic advertisements

c) **Video Advertisements** d) Email advertisements

5) One of the main disadvantages of digital advertising is the fact that it cannot be measured and it is considered uncontrollable.

a) True

b) False

6) Social Media ads cannot target a specific type of audience. Instead, it reaches masses due to the huge numbers of social media users.

a) True

b) False

7) Put the following steps of creating and managing Google Ads in order:

A) Select payment method

B) Choose Search Network

C) Create an account

D) Create a live campaign

E) User Access

a. CBADE **b. CDBAE** c. DABEC d. CDBEA

8) What is the right order of advertising campaign architecture in Google Ads?

A) Keywords

B) Ad Groups

C) Campaign

a. CAB b. BAC **c. CBA** d. ABC

b.

9) Please match the concepts with the correct definitions.

1. Paid influencer marketing	a. An online advertising method where text or image ads are prioritized on search results of search engines like Google and Bing
2. Search engine advertising	c. A type digital advertising that makes use of endorsements and products mentioned by influencers.
3. Meta Business Suite	d. It is the cost marketer pays every time a viewer clicks on the advertisement.
4. Cost Per Click	e. It is a free tool to manage Facebook, Instagram and Messenger ads

A. 1c, 2b, 3a, 4d B. 1d, 2b, 3a, 4c **C. 1b, 2a, 3d, 4c**

D. 1d, 2a, 3b, 4c

10) Please match the concepts with the correct definitions.

1. Retargeting	a. A model in which the advertiser pays every time a user clicks on the ad
2. Affiliate marketing	b. A specific type of display adverting that targets users who have previously interacted with the website
3. Native advertising	c. A type of digital advertising where publishers or online platforms and websites earn a commission by promoting a product or service of advertiser using an affiliate link
4. Pay per click ad	d. A form of paid advertising in which the ads are very much related to the digital platform they appear.

A) 1b, 2c, 3d, 4a B) 1d, 2b, 3c, 4a C) 1a, 2b, 3c, 4d

D) 1d, 2b, 3a, 4c

Module 7: Social Media Marketing for Small and Medium Sized Tourism Enterprises

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Learning Objectives

After reading this unit, the reader will be able to:

- know the meaning of social media marketing and its importance for tourism and hospitality businesses.
- outline the pros and cons of social media marketing for tourism and hospitality businesses.
- understand the strategic use of social media marketing for tourism and hospitality businesses.
- list the steps for tourism firms to follow when building social presence on social media.
- remember social media optimisation principles.
- analyse the mistakes that should be avoided in social media marketing.

7.0 Introduction

Social media refers to websites and applications that allow users to create and share content and information and participate in social interaction and networking. There are many different types of social media including blogs, business and professional networks like LinkedIn, image sharing websites like Instagram, microblogs like Twitter, review websites, social games, social networks like Facebook and video sharing platforms like YouTube (Visser, 2020). The impact of social media on marketing communication has been proven to play an important role, especially in the tourism and hospitality industry. Social media has facilitated the interaction of businesses with customers via different internet platforms. Social networking sites allow businesses, individuals and other organizations to communicate and interact with one another as well as to build communities and relationships online. The moment businesses join these social platforms, clients can interact with them in a direct and

easy way. This interaction between customers and businesses can be more personal to clients than traditional methods of marketing. The world of the internet has evolved in such a way that billions of people can meet and share content on social platforms, making it a powerful online world.

Not only social media allows businesses to promote their services or products, but also followers or users can post comments about a particular business, good or service being promoted, allowing companies to receive feedback on what they offer. In fact, social media users can consume, contribute to, and create content (Muntinga et al., 2011). There is no doubt that the advantages of using social media as a way of marketing would outweigh any drawbacks that might exist, as social media allow both marketers and customers to establish a strong relationship and engagement, allowing businesses' services and products to reach potential customers and increase purchases (Ibrahim, & Ganeshbabu, 2018).

In this module, you will learn how businesses, especially the tourism and hospitality businesses, can make use of social media as a way of marketing, as well as the main social media platforms or channels.

7.1 Social Media Marketing Defined

Social media is a group of webpages and applications that allow the creation and exchange of content on the internet (Kaplan and Heinlen, 2010). Social media has become a new method of communication in the 21st century, allowing people to express their ideas and beliefs in an easy and efficient way. It is also a new communication and marketing channel for businesses. Social media marketing is part of digital marketing and e-marketing, but social media marketing is more dominant and popular nowadays for practitioners and researchers (Ibrahim & Ganeshbabu, 2018). The use of the internet by some businesses have had a great impact on how they work and promote their businesses, leading to the use of social media. Social media has also had a huge impact on businesses, as they have realized that unless they have a social media strategy and a right plan, they cannot stand out in the digital world. Thus, in order to ensure a successful presence on social media, businesses have to take social media into account so that they can create awareness and promote their services and brands in a profitable way (Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2012).

Marketing which takes place via social media is known as social media marketing. In other words, social media marketing can be considered as the use of social media channels to promote and foster a business's products or services. Due to its consistency, reliability and instantaneous characteristics, social media has become useful way of reaching customers for businesses. Social media marketing has allowed businesses to target customers instantly, easily and effectively (Nadaraja & Yazdanifard, 2013). The huge growth of websites such as Facebook, Twitter or Linkedin have transformed the world into a new era. The global reach is amazing, so if Facebook were considered a country, it would be as large as India or China. Many people have argued that this has been the biggest change since the industrial revolution, allowing people to participate, communicate and create a community, as well as enabling businesses to make their services and brands known.

7.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media

According to Watson et al. (2002), cited by Nadaraja, &Yazdanifard (2013), due to the popularity of digital marketing, many businesses are exploring how social media can help them to promote their services and products to potential clients. Notwithstanding, it is of great importance for businesses to be aware of both the advantages and the drawbacks of social media marketing.

The most important benefits of social media marketing for businesses are related to cost reduction, targeted market, social interaction, interactivity (Nadaraja, & Yazdanifard, 2013).

Cost: According to Weinberg (2009), the major advantage of social media marketing is the low cost. The majority of social media platforms are free to use and access, leading people and businesses to create different profiles and post information. However, the cost of social media marketing depends on social media strategy of businesses. If a company wants to run advertising campaigns, the marketing cost of social media would go up. if a business only wants to use the platform for public display of the businesses and products, the expenses would go down.

Targeted market: Social media allows marketers to target audiences and clients based on their personal interests. With the use of social media marketing, marketers are able to effectively reach the audience who are most interested in what they offer.

With such "smart" marketing and advertising, marketers effectively reach the people who are most interested in what they have to offer. Social media marketing can target users based on their location, demographic profiles and interests.

Social interaction: One of the most remarkable benefits of social media is how it has created new ways of interactions. People spend more time online (chatting, sending and receiving emails or just seeing social media). Not only has social media changed the time people communicate online, but it has also broadened the group of individuals they communicate with, leading to new forms for behaviours to be influenced. Moreover, consumer behaviour studies have shown that the information provided online can influence buying decisions or the use of services.

Interactivity: According to Steuer (1992), unlike listening to the radio or watching television, the interactivity of social media enables clients to be more than just passive receivers of information. For this reason, businesses can track users in social media to obtain data and analyse their activity regarding the content of a business. Sajid (2016) explains social media marketing is based on the attempt of using social media in order to persuade people to use a business's service, items, brands or solutions. Different sectors are using social media marketing at different rates, and while many sectors have already started using it in order to get more customers, many still have not taken it as their top priority. As opposed to other conventional ways of marketing, social media marketing (SMM) offers many other advantages, among them are increasing subscribers/traffic, generating exposure for businesses, selling more items and solutions or popularity among people. Regarding social media marketing's role of trends, we can find the following (Sajid, 2016):

- Social media is used to create awareness and identity about the businesses, and the services, products or solutions that they offer.
- Social media creates connections with those people who may not know about the services or products of a business or what the businesses represent.
- Social media represent a "real" business to clients. Businesses can introduce their newest products and get customer feedback instantly.
- Social media provide constant connections with clients and customers.

Social media also offer benefits for consumers (Hanlon, 2019, p.277):

- Entertainment – to have fun.
- Social interaction – to connect with others.
- Information – to gain information.
- Personal identity/status – to build online identity and recognised status.
- Communication – to communicate with brands.
- Community development – to be part of a community.
- Remuneration/discounts – to gain offers and special deals.
- Purchase – to shop.
- Reviews and product rankings – to provide reviews.
- Submit opinion on products/services – to share opinions.
- Customer service – to seek customer service.

The world of social media has given rise not only to opportunities and benefits, but also to challenges and complications for the social media marketing process. According to Nadaraja, &Yazdanifard (2013) the disadvantages of social media are time intensive nature, trust, privacy and security issues, trademark and copyright, and negative feedbacks.

Time intensive: Time intensiveness of social media means that someone should be responsible for the monitoring of the online social platform. This person has to post product or service information to customers, answer questions and respond to comments. A business without a service to manage and control the social networks will find not be competitive. Thus, the most important thing to take into consideration is that social media is a tool that requires investment in personnel and other resources (Barefoot & Szabo, 2010).

Trust, Privacy and Security Issues: Utilizing social media to advertise a company's goods or services can also raise concerns about data security, privacy, and trust. It is of great importance for businesses to be aware of these issues, as well as to take right and suitable measures to minimise their exposure to responsibility related to the storing and use personal data. Trust, which is directly related to security, is a significant factor in the online buying process. In general, users cannot smell, touch or feel the product or services. Even people cannot look into the salesperson’s eyes (Steinman &

Hawkins, 2010). These forms of developing trust do not exist on the internet. A great number of people perceive internet as unsafe or an unreliable marketplace, and these perceptions sometimes stop potential clients from doing business on the web.

Trademark and Copyright Issues: When marketers use social media, they should regularly take into account the monitoring of the use of their copyrights and trademarks. Social media opens your brand up to social media copyright and trademark infringement. Businesses ought to monitor third-party social media platforms and their own social media outlets in order to guarantee that they are not using content without owners' consent and other social platforms are not using their content without permission.

Negative Feedbacks: Social media can convert clients into advertisers and marketers, and customers can create negative or positive publicity for the business, its services and products, depending both on the quality of those products or services provided to the clients and on how the company is presented online (Roberts & Kraynak, 2008).

One aspect of social media which is harmful to businesses and marketing campaigns relates to negative posts and comments on social media. Industry competitors or unsatisfied clients can post offensive or disparaging posts, comments, videos or pictures and there is not much that a marketer can do in order to avoid these occurrences (Cheunget al., 2009). Negative feedback cannot be ignored, so social networks should be managed well enough to rapidly answer and neutralise damaging comments or posts which takes time (HennigThurau et al., 2004).

7.3 Main Social Media Platforms and Features

Mass media such as television, newspapers or radio have dominated the world and they still do. Notwithstanding, a new trend has developed: social media. Facebook, YouTube or Twitter are just a few instances of successful social media platforms which are used by a great number of people in the world. Actually, the number of social media users is continuously rising (Uitz, 2012). According to Lin & Rauschnabel (2016), since the early 2000s, many aspects of human societies

Table 1: Main Social Media Platforms, Users and Features

	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter	YouTube	LinkedIn	Pinterest	Snapchat
USERBASE*	2.2 billion users	1 billion users	330 million users	1 billion users	250 million active users	200 million users	200 million users
GENDER	53 % Women	51 %Male	53 % Male	62 % Male	56 % Male	71 % women	70 % Women
AGE	Most common age demographic 25-34	55 % of people 18 -29 use Instagram	35 % of users are between 18 -29	26 % of users are between 35-44	27 % (81 million) of users are between 30-49	Most common age demographic 25-34	7/10 users are millennials
INCOME/ EDUCATION	72 % of online users with an income of $75k+ use Facebook	63 % of users earn over $50k	56 % of users earn over $50k	46 % of users earn over $75k	44 % of users earn over $75k	57 % of users have a four – year college degree	62 % of users earn less than $50k
GREAT FOR	A variety of industries and businesses and B2C Marketing	Demonstrating brand culture . Engaging young audiences . Showing Products	Thought leadership . Trending topics . News, culture and events	How-to . Product reviews . Gaming . Entertainment . Education	B2B Marketing . Recruiting . Networking	Retail sales . Fashion, DIY, Home, Beauty and Food . Showing Products	Reaching young audiences . Showcasing products & lifestyle
IDEAL CONTENT	Images& Videos	Images & Videos	Text, Links, GIFs, Short Video	Video	Short Blogs, Infographics, Images & Videos	Images, Infographics	Video
ADVERTISING	Solid -Best in the business	Excellent, courtesy Facebook	Decent	Robust platform High ROI	Strong – ROI not up to the mark	Good if targeted well	Expensive
DRAWBACKS	Clickbait & Fake News	Limited user attention span	Lack of security against trolls and abusers	Videos can be expensive to make	Largely focused on careers and jobs	Very niche demographics	Advertising is expensive . Conent self-destructs . You cannot comment/like posts

Source: Neher, 2019, p.61.

worldwide have been significantly influenced by the new internet technologies. Social media can be considered as one of the latest examples of the interactions between users and technologies which have changed societies. Li and Bernoff (2012), as cited in Lin & Rauschnabel (2016), have used the concept “groundswell” in order to refer to a social trend, based on the use of social media technologies by part of people to obtain information they want from other users, instead of receiving the information from the public or typical professional sources. The term social media can be used in order to describe different platforms which enable users to – 1) communicate with other users, 2) publish and consume content, 3) interact with brands and businesses. The

most common forms of social media platforms are opinion platforms, social networks, blogs and content sharing platforms. To access these social media platforms, it is necessary to use different devices such as laptops, desktop computers, tablets or smart phones (Lin &Rauschnabel, 2016). There are numerous social media platforms. The most outstanding social platforms, profile of their users and main purpose of use are given in Table 1. Also, pros and cons of various social media platforms in terms of social media marketing for tourism and hospitality businesses is provided below (Constant Contact, 2022).

Table 2: Pros and cons of Facebook

Pros	Cons
• It is easy to use. • The user base is large. • Business and personal pages can be separated • Any type of content can be posted: photos, videos or even links to other content, for instance, external context. By this way, people can see our products/services and we can increase the visibility of our business	• Limited ability to customise the page. • It is a closed environment, that is, anyone can find a business' page, but only Facebook users can like the page to receive the updates.

Source: Constant Contact, 2022.

Facebook: It is one of the largest of the social networks. Businesses should create a Facebook business page through Meta Business Suite. Facebook users can like a page in order to stay updated on promotions, information about the brands or services, events, or just to show their appreciation. Facebook can be used to promote a business, display products, and get people's attention.

Twitter: It is a real-time information network which enables users to discover and share interesting content through "tweets". Twitter has been considered as a microblogging service since it limits the status updates to a limited number of characters. Twitter is one of the quickest ways to reach people who might be interested in a business's services, products or events. Moreover, this social network platform can be used to get real-time feedback from members, clients or event attendees. Nowadays, this social network is increasing the number of people who use it, so Twitter can be an interesting platform to show our products/services or to announce new promotions, events etc.

Table 3: Pros and Cons of Twitter

Pros	Cons
• Members and clients can "follow" a business without having to reciprocate. • The Twitter feed is public, which means that it can help a business to have a greater exposure in search results. • It is easy and quick to share links in order to help to spread a particular message to a wide audience. • The use of hashtags is implemented on Twitter, and its use is generalised, so we can use it with keywords related to our business to reach new people and increase our audience.	• It is challenging to post something in a limited number of characters. • Users are vocal, which means that the moment they have a problem with a particular business or product, they can express it immediately. • It takes time to build active followers and it requires a daily engagement to share content.

Source: Constant Contact, 2022.

YouTube: It is the most popular video platform. Anyone who creates an account can upload videos. This social media platform makes it easy for videos of businesses to go viral through search engines or external sharing tools. It is easy to embed a video on a blog or website, and it can also be shared on Twitter, Facebook, or other social media networks. As Neher (2019) suggests, mastering YouTube can result in a million video views for your business.

Table 4: Pros and Cons of YouTube

Pros	Cons
• The video can be shared on other social media platforms. • YouTube offers numerous ways of enhancement and editing characteristics which help users to make up more professional sounding and looking videos.	• While a person does not need a YouTube account to watch videos and share them, it is necessary to create an account to publish them.

Source: Constant Contact, 2023.

Instagram: It is a photo-sharing app which lets users to take pictures and share them on the platform. In addition, users can apply filters to the pictures. Instagram also includes a storytelling function which enables users to share instant video clips. Owned by Facebook, Instagram has continued to grow steadily, and the visual format leads to

high engagement rates. Thus, Instagram is powerful for visual businesses, yet many businesses are not still as active as they could be on the platform. The rise of Instagram influencers also means that many businesses rely on partners to promote them on Instagram (Neher, 2019).

Table 5: Pros and Cons of Instagram

Pros	Cons
• The platform encourages a more casual tone, and Instagram stories allow us to give followers a "behind the scenes" look at how our business operates. • The content may be accessed again indefinitely or until the author decides to remove it. • Instagram videos are significantly more likely to be watched because they are brief and bite-sized.	• The user must register for an Instagram account before they may like or comment on a post. • Instagram videos challenge us to think of original ways to communicate our thoughts or messages in just 60 seconds.

Source: Frith, Sabuni & Drumond, 2018.

LinkedIn: LinkedIn is social network for professionals and businesses. Nothing else comes closer, and since the acquisition by Microsoft they've gotten more serious about rolling out new innovative features for users and businesses. Every business should have a presence on LinkedIn, but B2B businesses should see it as a strategic tool. With a renewed focus on the news feed, content, videos, and groups, LinkedIn is positioning itself as a bigger and more relevant business platform (Neher, 2019).

Table 6: Pros and Cons of LinkedIn

Pros	Cons
• It allows networking opportunities and prompts direct business relationships. • It enables sharing of knowledge and expertise. • Ability to post blog-length articles to showcase expertise.	• The B2B focus means the audience is limited. • Ads can be poorly targeted, leading to a potential overload of irrelevant content.

Source: Digital Creative Mind, 2021

Pinterest: Pinterest is still privately owned and arguably not as broadly popular as the other big networks. It is still large and growing and importantly, shows tremendous potential for businesses to organically promote their content. Pinterest is the go-to

Table 7: Pros and Cons of Pinterest

Pros	Cons
• As users are encouraged to discover content for themselves, there is not much emphasis on actively engaging our audience. • Images are hyperlinked to the original source. • Selective following adds appeal to the audience.	• We need to ensure our imagery is well chosen, optimized and that the design is sharp. • Audience demographics can be limited.

Source: Digital Creative Mind, 2021.

website for recipes, style, home decor, weddings, food, shopping, design, and fitness. What makes Pinterest unique is that people are sharing content from the internet. Over 80% of pins are re-pins which means that it is where people go to share and discover things, they are interested in.

7.4. Strategic Use of Social Media for Tourism and Hospitality Businesses

Tourism and hospitality businesses can use social media in five strategic ways which are explained below.

7.4.1 Creating Awareness and Identity on Social Media

One of the most important advantages of social media for businesses is that it increases the visibility and awareness of the business. Firms can introduce their goods and services, their location, new products and sales etc. The use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram or Twitter allow businesses to be known and popular amongst the public. Only by a click of a mouse, users who are interested in the hospitality or tourism products and destinations, can glance through an ocean of tourism and hospitality service businesses, destinations, recommendations, comments, etc. Thus, the use of social media platforms as a way to make the business known is the perfect strategy for creating brand awareness and identity and introduce firms' goods and services. Any change or innovation involving social media has been and is useful for the growth of a business's page or account. It is important to use tabs and live videos for different social media pages. For instance, Facebook tabs have been created for companies in order to show and categorise distinct information in

dissimilar pages on their timelines. The aim of Tabs is to display a variety of information as well as to inform the users or the audience of what a particular company has to offer. Different businesses are now capable of creating custom tabs which both engage the audience in entertaining and amusing ways and provide information (Jones, 2015). According to Huertas (2018), stories and live videos have some distinctive features which make it easier for the audience to publish and watch tourism experiences in situ. With regards to live videos, it is their immediacy that gives more credibility, proximity and authenticity to users and improves the tourism experience to a wider extent than common or normal videos. Virtual tourism not only gives more authenticity, but also produces more attraction to destinations and tourist businesses. Besides, live videos decrease the psychological distance between users and so they transmit more closeness (Mura et al., 2017 and Lim et al., 2012 as cited in Huertas, 2018)

7.4.2 Listening and Engaging Customer on Social Media

Social networks such as Facebook, Twitter or Myspace provides an interface between the business and the client. Many large enterprises have already updated social media pages for customer support and customer service. Through social media, tourism and hospitality businesses can engage in market sensing by which they get feedback regarding customer complaints, dissatisfactions, service failures. Firms can also get suggestions with respect to product improvements. Many businesses are actively using social media platforms to get customer feedback and provide support services. Tourism and hospitality businesses can also engage customers by providing information with respect to product updates, discounts, new products, loyalty programs etc.

7.4.3 Promotion on Social Media

Tourism and hospitality business can use social platforms as marketing communication channels. Through social media businesses can update customers with the latest information on new products, support services, promotions etc. Advertising in social media is another powerful and efficient way of marketing communication which creates and reinforces bonds between customers and firms. One of the best advantages of social media advertising is related to the ability to track, test, refine and target the advertisements with precision. For example meta pixel is

considered as a data-gathering tool which is useful for making the most of the ads across social media platforms such as Facebook. Facebook meta pixel is able to collect information or data which is helpful to track conversions from optimise ads, Facebook ads, create targeted audiences for future advertisements as well as remarketing to users who have already taken action on the business's website. Facebook meta pixel places and triggers cookies so as to trace the users as they interact with the business both off and on Facebook (Newberry, 2021).

Influencer marketing on social media is another tool that can be used for promoting tourism and hospitality businesses. An influencer is someone who can influence and lead a large group of people. Influencer marketing is a type of social media marketing that involves paying influencers to promote a company's products to their followers. Their posts and recommendations regarding a product or business on different blogs or social media platforms make it possible for businesses to get a higher popularity and reach, leading to higher sales. Hiring influencers is the best strategy for a company to improve loyalty, visibility and sales increase. For that reason, it is of great importance to consider the possibility of working with famous (or non-famous) people, who can make a business's products and services known and more popular through their personal accounts, leading to a growth of purchases (Català, 2019). The rise of the internet and the great penetration of smart phones in our lives, along with the appearance of RRSS in the last five years, are the main pillars on which the phenomenon of influencers is based nowadays. The youth have also entered the digital world in a special way. It is here where the influencer phenomenon is more important and where the services and products are easier to promote. The capacity of certain people to obtain friends, likes and followers makes influencers look like new online marketing channels to promote the product and go further in less time and with a tighter budget than in more traditional campaigns (Català, 2019). The influencers can be divided on different groups depending on their number of followers and their size (Gundová, Minanová&Smutný, 2019):

- Nano-influencer: up to 10.000 followers.
- Micro-influencer: over 10.000 followers.
- Macro-influencer: over 100.000 followers.
- Mega-influencer: over 1 million followers.

Clients watch their personal accounts, where they go, what they do or what they eat, among others, and try to find trends which clients may follow. Many of these influencers have a wide viewership on different social platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat or Facebook. Businesses often opt for long-term collaborations with influencers, since it is more trustworthy and price-attractive for the users and clients in comparison to the traditional marketing ways and tools. It is very significant for influencers to like the services and products as even they use them (Gundová, Minanová & Smutný, 2019). According to Gundová, Minanová&Smutný (2019), the major power of influencers is that users see them as friends. People get to know what they do, their lives and know everything about them. Influencers have the power to introduce a particular service or brand to their followers, and they can become trust ambassadors. There is no doubt that influencer marketing is the new trend, which leads to the growth of the business.

7.4.4 Selling on Social Media

Tourism and hospitality businesses can use social media to directly sell their goods and services. Social media can be a hub for selling goods and services of a business (López, Quer& Valdés, 2016). First, social media can provide backlinks and tabs to website page of a business to encourage sales. Second, for easy direct selling, businesses can create online shops that are linked to their Facebook or Instagram profiles. Creating an online store for either platform is free. Finally, business can create product picture and video catalogue on social media and sell directly to customers.

According to López, Quer& Valdés (2016), it is not enough to open a business profile on Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook or other similar platforms: businesses also have to dedicate effort, time and resources to this labour if they want to be successful. When establishing a relationship with the client, it has to be based on quality content that is relevant to potential clients and in a continuous dialogue with users. The ultimate goal of this strategy is to awaken their interest in the company, to the point of encouraging them to buy the products or use the services that the businesses are offering. Selling on social media requires the following (López, Quer& Valdés, 2016):

- **Acquire digital skills:** Businesses should go the extra mile in order to fully understand the new technologies and their applications, especially regarding the use of mobile devices (both phones and tablets).

- **Know how to manage social networks to get closer to users:** To have success, the business must adapt to new media, for instance Facebook, Instagram or Twitter. Mastering the use of these social media platforms is essential to know more about potential customers: what they study, where they work or what contacts the business and the users have in common.

- **Change the chip in time management:** Using social media platforms with fluency is not a skill that is achieved overnight. For that reason, it is required to reserve a part of the working hours for this task and spend time using them daily.

- **Bury the usual slogans:** It is important to be aware that the argument "our company is the best" no longer works. Today, the client seeks to be helped and, above all, to be listened to.

7.5 Steps to Build a Presence on Social Networks

It is important for a business to develop a plan before jumping into using and managing social media platforms. The guide below prepared by Frith et al. (2018) can be used by businesses in order to enter into the social media world.

1-The first thing a business ought to do is to ask itself the following questions:

- *What do we have that is helpful and beneficial and how can we communicate it best?*
- *What can we provide that no one else can? How do we stand out?*

A company must first define its business, benefits it provides to customers and competitive advantages relative to competitors.

2-The second thing a business should ask itself is:

- *Who is the audience? – It is necessary to define the target market.*
- *What does the audience expect from our business?*

For instance, applied to the tourism and hospitality sector, people may expect facilities closer to the city centre, lower price, car park, quick service, facilities and services for children etc.

3-The third question would be:

- *Why is it important to go on social media?*

The main reason for using social media as a way of marketing is to:

- Increase the brand identity and visibility of a business including its products or services.
- Inform customers about products of business and its location.
- Get customer feedback regarding company products and performance.
- Drive traffic to the website of a business.
- Raise the number of visits to the platform.
- Create engagement and brand loyalty among customers.

4-The fourth question a business should ask itself is:

- *Which social media platforms are the best to show the content?*
- *Which ones are best suited to what we offer?*

It is relevant to select the social media platform which is best suited to what the business offers.

5- The final question is:

- *What resources can we assign to social media and when it is best to post content?*

Managing what to post and when to post on social media is very important. Moreover, the different social media platforms do not require to post in the same way:

- Facebook: Once a day and four times per week is enough. It is necessary to focus on great content which can attract engagement.

- Instagram: Once or twice a day. It is better to post pictures which tell stories as well as to make use of distinct pictures for each post.

- Twitter: Re-publishing the same content can be possible. It is required to do so “as much as possible”, using images but sharing the same content/link.

The last thing a business ought to do is to measure the success of the implementation of the plan by analysing the data. Data may relate to the number of interactions, the number of clicks or likes, the opinions and comments, re-tweets, etc. The analytics used by social networks are examined in module 10. Through data analysis, a business is able to know if it is succeeding or not, and take actions on the matter by posting less or more, changing the approach of visuals and texts, posting different types of images or content.

7.6 Social Media Optimisation Techniques

Social media optimization (SMO) can be defined as a strategy for creating and engaging a community. By following a set of principles for making and sharing content through social media platforms, a business’s brand or service can become an active voice in a community, leading to a rich and wide multitude of community interactions. The main goal of SMO is to encourage social media engagement and content sharing through different social media networks in order to reach popularity among the community of people who are using those social media networks (Young, 2016).

Table 8: Differences between Search Engine Optimisation and Social Media Optimisation

Search Engine Optimisation	**Social Media Optimisation**
On-site optimization	Off-site optimization
Search engine results	Social media search
Site structure	Content
Number of visits, site traffic	Conversations, number of quality visits
Measuring link conversion	Building a community
Marketing to search engines	Marketing to targeted audience, community

Source: Ubervu (2010)

As it was explained before, SEO raises traffic coming from search engines for different websites. However, as opposed to SEO, social media optimization (SMO) creates a web of interaction around a particular content by making it disposable and

shareable through different social media platforms. It is significant to take into account the main differences between SEO and SMO, shown in the Table 8 above (Ubervu, 2010).

People are more and more aware of the power and benefits of using social media to spread content about a particular service or product, so it is important to consider the different techniques of social media optimization (Young, 2016). Table 9 shows some criteria that can be used for choosing various social media platforms. Below are some principles that can be used when using social media for marketing purposes (Young, 2016).

- **Create shareable content:** Make available and shareable content by first identifying and making web sites which can be shared via social networks. For instance, news articles which are important to the community or items from digital collections. We should regard the content must be unexpected, authentic and new, and by this way the audience will feel they are obtaining privileged information.

- **Make sharing easy:** Put different tools in place in order to foster sharing content at the point of use. This will be helpful to decrease barriers to share by benefiting from sharing characteristics built into different major platforms like Twitter or Facebook.

Table 9: Choosing the Right Social Media Platform for Businesses

	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter	YouTube	LinkedIn	Pinterest	Snapchat
POSTING FREQUENCY	1-4x per week	1–7x per week	2-10x Per day, including retweet & replies	Weekly or when applicable	1-7x per week	3- 14x per week	4-7x per week
WHEN TO POST	When relevant to audience	When audience is online	Spread throughout the day	When audience is online	During business hours	Spread throughout the day	When relevant to audience
USE OF HASHTAGS	Limited search functionality. Recommended: 1-2 per post.	Recommended: 20-30 per post	Recommended 1-2 per tweet	Use in descriptions. Recommended: a handful per upload	Recommended: 1- 5 per post	Recommended: 3- 5 per post	Not popularly used
BEST PERFORMING CONTENT	Photos . Videos	Photos . Short videos	Questions . Multimedia	Product Reviews . How-to Guides . Educational videos	News . Updates . Articles	Style . Home . Food & Drink . Beauty	Fun& playful . Lenses & filters
IDEAL VIDEO LENGTH	1 Minute for video 5+ Mins for Live Video	30 seconds	45 Seconds	2 Minutes	1- 2 Minutes	Based on source video	10 seconds
CONTENT TIPS	Thumb-stopping power . Short & catchy Videos & images . Respond to comments	Real photos of real things . Use hashtags . Single focus of image	Mix content . Retweet . Reply and participate	Clear purpose for video . Compelling storyline . Add variety to video topics	Positive& relevant content . Add images & video . Value for audience	Variety of content . Create multiple boards . Curate content from other sources	Capture attention . Showcase business or product . Fun& light
AUDIENCE BUILDING TIPS	Post Consistent and engaging content . Boost posts	Use hashtags . Engage with audience	Tweet more often . Use hashtags and participate	Optimize for search . Post conc-sistently	Add contacts to your network . Engage via comments and groups	Post often . Create searchable descriptions	User-generated content . Cross-promote on other platforms

Source: Neher, 2019, p. 62.

- **Proactively share:** It is relevant to understand the interests of the community through different methods such as surveys or focus groups, and then follow through with content sharing and interactivity.

- **Reward engagement:** It is involved in the monitoring of the community interactions on different social media networks and in the recognition and reward of users who are engaged with the content. For example, a business can listen to the community by monitoring community conversation through the use of hashtags, content mentions, etc.

7.7 Things to Avoid: Social Media Mistakes

Businesses should be aware of the common mistakes that both individuals and companies make in social media platforms in order to avoid them. Among them, the most common mistakes are as follow according to Friedman (2015):

Treating every platform, the same: Every social media site is different from the rest, and that is why it is necessary to approach them differently. For instance, in Twitter, it is required to get to the point quickly as there is a character limit to post the message.

However, Facebook platform does not have a character limit, providing businesses room to expand. On the other hand, Facebook sometimes hides content when posting too much, and as a result, users may not see it, and this does not happen on Twitter. This is why businesses should take into consideration every nuance of each platform.

Posting too frequently - or not frequently enough: It is indispensable to have a balance. Flooding followers with Facebook posts or with tweets may be tiresome. Equally, being out of sight is not correct either. If a business does rarely post, followers will forget about its services or products. This is why considering a balance is significant.

Using poor spelling or incorrect grammar: It is relevant to project a professional image to followers, and bear in mind misspelt words or grammatical errors when posting.

Failing to use hashtags: When people are on social sites such as Instagram or Twitter, they try to become part of the conversation. The use of hashtags enables more users to see the contributions to that particular conversation. For instance, if a person tweets something without a hashtag, only that person's followers would see it. However, if a person uses a hashtag, many people could be exposed to what he or she has to say.

Posting offensive or inappropriate material: A business can quickly ruin years of goodwill if the social media platforms are used in order to post something which users may find offensive.

7.8. Reporting and Analysis on Social Media

According to Chen, Cheng & Chen (2018), when thousands and million audiences make use of social media in order to cooperate, produce and share different contents, the messages create a big unprecedented dataset through the record, automatic categorization and preservation by the social media platform. The data which is generated by social media includes both the content produced by people as well as the metadata produced by machines. The data sets are enormous in variety and quantity, and Manovich (2012, p. 2) named it as "Social Big Data." Through this

data, the huge amount of imagination, facts, opinions and feelings that users have produced can be seen (Yang and Hhao, 2016, p. 2).

Social media analytics could be considered as an emerging field to which researchers have given different opinions. For instance, Zeng et al. (2010), cited by the previous authors, have stated that social media analytics refers to a set of skills for evaluating and developing informatic tools as well as to developing frameworks to visualise, collect, analyse, monitor and summarise social media data. Many researchers have discovered that social big data analysis has faced different challenges. Among them are the difficulty applying automated technologies in the process of dataset derived through human behaviour, the complexity and enormity of the data, and the transparency and completeness of the data (Chen, Cheng & Chen, 2018).

Social media analysis involves the following stages according to Chen, Cheng & Chen (2018):

1. **Data processing:** This includes five elements: Algorithm (which means that social media platforms will use variables and a formula in order to calculate social interaction), Data/Metadata (the structural message of the data or in other words, the data about data), Interface, Protocol (which joins the data formats of distinct systems and it also directs user behaviour in a favoured direction) and Default (which refers to the software which has the function of directing the user).

2. **Data collection:** It is concerned with the process of monitoring, tracking, cleaning, mining and arranging the digital footprints which are left by different social media platforms or users, then making them into targets for analysis.

3. **Data clean-up:** Every dataset can include characters, icons, numbers or other formats. Due to the fact that social media data has a wide amount of non-structural data, researchers have to clean that data. The main objective of cleaning the data is to convert the data into an easy-to-process scale.

4. **Data selection:** It takes place when researchers recognize and keep corresponding columns with analysis requirements.

5. **Data filtering/sifting:** Researchers give instructions to keep or eliminate data.

6. **Data integration/separation:** Researchers have to separate or combine distinct columns or make new columns for analysis.

7. **Data metrics:** The metrics are normally used as research variables. For instance, the Facebook monitor integrates the number of dropped messages, the quantity of the clicked “like” button or the number of “shares”.

8. **Data analysis:** It is based on the analysis of the data. There are different types of data analysis: temporal analysis (it observes the social media data in a particular period of time), relational analysis (it uses the relational data produced by the social media platform whose main objective is to observe the relational context among social platform users), numerical analysis (it shows the relationship between the data dimensions through statistical results) and sentiment analysis (researches correlate the selected target vocabulary and its effect, that is, whether the text has a positive or negative effect).

As far as Instagram analytics is concerned, Bellavista, Foschini & Ghiselli (2019), carried out an analysis of an Instagram account in order to have an evaluation of it. As shown in Table 10, they focused on different aspects: analysed period, posts, followers, post like average, max liked post, max post reachability, weekly profile visitors, engagement rate and new reach users. Through this analysis, the success or failure of a particular Instagram account can be measured.

Table 10: Instagram Account of a Business

	Normal Activity
Analysed Period	22 months
Posts	130
Followers	541
Post Like Average	94
Max Liked Post	130
Max Post Reachability	550
Weekly Profile Visitors	100
Engagement Rate	5%
New Reached Users	15%

Source: Bellavista, Foschini & Ghiselli, 2019.

Through this analysis they found out that the Instagram account was not so successful in growing a business.

With regards to Facebook platforms, there are different views to see if a particular Facebook page is being successful or not (Youth Tech Health, No Date):

- **Calculate monthly fan growth**: a business can be aware of the success of a page by recording the numbers of “Likers” (or fans).
- **Look at the virality of the posts**: this will be useful for a company in order to have a better idea of what kind of content the viewers like or what type of content is more popular.
- **Find out who likes the page**: by going to the Likes tab, a business can take a look at the fan base. Is that the audience the business expected or not?
- **See how people get to the Facebook page:** by going to the reach tab and scrolling down to external references, a business can see how users got to the business’s page from outside links. This will be helpful as the business is aware of how well it is doing in relation to having a voice in social media platforms

Finally, regarding Twitter platform, through analytics, it will be observed the following (Castelló-Martínez, Pino-Romero & Ramos-Soler, 2014):

- The number of followers that the Twitter account has and the accounts of other users who follow.
- The number of tweets, re-tweets, mentions and use of hashtags.
- Determine the frequency of publication and interaction on Twitter by part of users.

7.9 Conclusion

The purpose of this module is to demonstrate how tourism and hospitality businesses can make use of social media as a way of marketing. For this purpose, you were first provided the basics of social media marketing including the context and positives and negatives of SMM and fundamental social media platforms commonly used by companies. Once the main issues discussed, you were given information about what kind of strategies can be used to develop SMM for tourism and hospitality businesses. Next, you were explained social media optimisation techniques, and given information about best practices for tourism and hospitality businesses. Finally, when conducting SMM, the issues that need to be considered or the possible mistakes that needs to be avoided were discussed and how SMM activities can be reported were explained thoroughly.

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Evaluation Questions

1) Which of the following social media platform has as disadvantage in terms of limited number of characters in a post?

a. Facebook
b. Twitter
c. Instagram
d. Blog

2) Which of the following term refers to people who can influence large number of people through their posts and recommendations regarding a product or business on social media platforms?

a. Influencers
b. Post blogs
c. Mailing
d. Using “Google Business Profile”

3) Which of the following is a mistake in social media marketing?

a. Treating every platform the same
b. Interacting with users
c. Dividing audiences based on their interests
d. Incorporating external links

4) Social media marketing is marketing which takes place via _____.

a) Skype b) Letters **c) Social media** d) E-mails

5) The main goal of _____ is to encourage social media commitment and content sharing through different social media networks in order to reach popularity among the community of people who are using those social media networks.

a) Social media optimization b) Facebook c) Search engine optimization d) Pay per click

6) Social media marketing has allowed businesses to target customers instantly.
a) True b) False

7) The last step to build a presence of a brand in social media is to define what a business wants to communicate and find the best style to show the content online.
a) True **b) False**

8) Which of the following is a technique for social media optimization?
a) Make sharing easy
b) Proactively share
c) Create shareable content
d) All

a) **cabd** **b)** abdc c) bcda d) dacb

9) What is the correct order of steps for businesses to build their social media presence?
a) Knowing the audience
b) Deciding the role and importance of social media for the business
c) Defining the business and benefits a business provides to customers
d) Selection of social media
e) Assigning resources and creating content

a) **cabd** b) abdc c) bcda d) dacb

10) What strategic marketing purposes can tourism businesses use social media for?
a) Creating identity and awareness
b) Listening and engaging customer
c) Social selling
d) Promotion
e) All

Module 8: Mobile Marketing for Small and Medium Sized Tourism Enterprises

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Learning Objectives

On successful completion of this module the learner will be able to:

- tell the importance of mobile marketing applications in the tourism and hospitality industries;
- explain definitions and terms related to mobile marketing;
- recognize the pros and cons of mobile marketing;
- list the mobile marketing channels;
- determine the key elements for successful mobile search optimization;
- define the mobile code of conduct by the mobile association;
- underline the importance of privacy issues on mobile applications;
- name key performance indicators for mobile marketing performance;
- design their own mobile marketing strategy.

8.0 Introduction

The development of information and communication technologies and the extensive use of mobile phones have changed the marketing world dramatically. A new type of marketing model has appeared, called mobile marketing. This has given countless opportunities to businesses regardless of their size to reach wider audiences, display interactive content and get the customers engaged while being on the move. As Wei-Han Tan put it “the emergence of smartphones and the advancement of four-generation wireless data networks have urged the development of new software too. Consumers can get online via their m-devices (mobile devices) download apps and complete tasks as they would do on their personal computers” (Wei-Han Tan, 2017, p.560).

The rapid growth of mobile phone users has brought new changes in the marketing field. Tourism and hospitality marketers should adapt to them creating more "mobile" marketing campaigns. Mobile marketing allows tourism and hospitality businesses to target visitors with personalized features and content. The content offered in the mobile channel should be practical, user-friendly and certainly adjusted for smaller screens. Smartphone users keep on growing and growing. Due to its numerous tools and capabilities it has been adopted by many marketers in the tourism and hospitality industries. "It is very important for a digital marketing professional to carefully analyze the target audience's internet behavior before making decisions about their marketing strategies. There is a global switch to mobile (smartphones and tablets) away from desktop PCs" (Visser, Sikkenga & Berry, 2021, p.71).

The benefits of mobile marketing are tremendous mobile applications make it easier for consumers to perform several tasks practically anytime anywhere. However, marketers face some challenges too. The insights collected through mobile phones are personal and the users need to be ensured that they stay secure and safe. Tourism and hospitality businesses using personal information should follow privacy rules and legislation by any means.

This module aims to present the basic elements of mobile marketing so as to be applied by SMEs in the tourism and hospitality industries. The definition of mobile marketing and other related concepts is presented along with the several channels that can be utilized to make the best use of mobile marketing applications to promote small and medium-sized enterprises in tourism and hospitality.

8.1 What is Mobile Marketing?

Mobile marketing is an omnichannel, digital marketing strategy that reaches your preferred target audience via smartphones and tablets using websites, email, SMS, messaging and social media apps (https://www.marketo.com/mobile-marketing/). According to the Mobile Marketing Association, mobile marketing is defined as "the use of wireless media as integrated content delivery and direct response vehicle within cross-media marketing communication program" (Mobile Marketing Association, 2015). Mobile marketing is a marketing communication method that uses mobile media, mobile advertising, wireless marketing and wireless

advertising (Eze, Chinedu-Eze, & Asamu, 2019, p.4). The extensive use of mobile devices has brought incredible changes to the behaviour of consumers, their attitudes and preferences. As a result, the marketers are forced to stay updated and keep a close eye on what the consumers use the most. Nowadays, customers prefer digital and dynamic content with personalized features and practicality. Mobile marketing is growing rapidly, particularly among small and medium sized tourism enterprises (SMTEs) because it gives them the chance to generate brand awareness, boost brand recognition and increase competitiveness and revenue really fast.

The widespread adoption of wireless technology and mobile devices has fundamentally changed the field of marketing, especially in hospitality and tourism. Phones and tablets are widely used in our daily activities and they keep track of what we do. Mobile phone and tablet platforms are adopted to engage customers, since they can be used in various locations and targeting audiences become more and more accurate. According to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2016, p.40), the main platforms are the following:

1) Mobile operating system and browser: There are mobile browsers that are closely integrated with the operating system.
2) Mobile-based apps: Apps are proprietary to the mobile operating system, whether Apple iOS, Google Android, RIM or Windows: A big decision is whether to deliver content and experience through a browser and/or a specific app that provides an improved experience. Recent research shows that the majority of mobile media time is app-based.

The tourism and hospitality industries can find great opportunities through mobile marketing and the usage of mobile platforms. Through the various communication tools that mobile marketing channels offer, SMTEs can increase their visibility and increase the awareness of the destination in which they are located. By using engaging content and keeping in contact with potential visitors, they can achieve a positive WOM (Word of Mouth) and target their market. Statistics show that 63% of travellers use smartphone when booking (https://www.businessofapps.com/news/travel-goes-mobile-63-use-smartphone-when-booking/). According to Google, 70% of U.S. travellers always use their smartphones when traveling. (https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/consumer-insights/consumer-trends/consumer-travel-smartphone-mobile-usage-always/).

An interesting example of how a hospitality organization is using mobile marketing is mentioned in the book “Digital Marketing Fundamentals” (Visser, Sikkenga & Berry, 2021, p.26-27):

“By Marjolein Visser

Marriott International, the parent organization of, amongst others, the Marriott and Ritz Carlton hotels, tries to make use of as much modern technology as possible to meet the needs of the young, contemporary business traveller, so-called Millennials. Using the Marriott Bonvoy app, guests participating in the loyalty program are able to book a hotel, check in on their mobile device, request services and extras, and chat with Marriott employees before, during, and after their stay. The app uses chatbots for simple questions, allowing guests to receive an immediate response. On the day before their arrival at the hotel, guests receive a push notification on their smartphone, informing them that they can check-in. They will then receive an automatic notification when their room is ready for them. 1 This prior communication means that the hotel is prepared for their arrival. Since payment information is stored in the guest profiles, guests are given a virtual key via the app or, upon entering the hotel, they may visit a dedicated check-in counter where a pre-programmed key card is already waiting for them. At the end of their stay, guests receive another push notification alerting them to the availability of a mobile checkout option. Should they so choose, guests are asked to provide an email address to which their invoice can be sent, meaning they no longer have to call the Hotel Reception.

Within the hotel itself the many possibilities that mobile communication has to offer are also employed. Marriott app users can request the most commonly used services from a drop-down menu, such as the provision of extra towels, pillows or breakfast in bed. With increasing frequency, hotel rooms are also being equipped with a digital assistant which connects guests with the Reception, allowing them to request room service, for example. Stephanie Linnartz, Group President, Consumer Operations, Technology & Emerging Businesses, commented at the Skift Tech Forum: “To remain the market leader, we are constantly improving and expanding our offer through direct channels. We offer our loyal customers benefits when they book directly, such as free Wi-Fi, member rates and mobile check-in/out, mobile keys as well as other benefits. Our new and improved booking solution makes it possible for customers to ‘customize’ their stay. They can choose rooms with specific features,

including ones they are willing to pay extra for and be assured of. Our customers enjoy knowing what their options are and being in control of them".

"Marriott combines 'high tech' with 'high touch' to offer guests a seamless and personalized experience. We use technology that enables our members to have an ongoing "conversation" with us, regardless of which channel or device they are using, whether they are staying in one of our accommodations, or communicating through our call centre agents, our app, or whilst searching for something on Marriott.com".

The M Live social media monitoring hub also plays an important role in providing a seamless customer experience. Messages that hotel guests send via social media are analysed from social hubs in the United States, Europe, and Asia. When someone is staying in a Marriott hotel, this is identified from the geolocation that is linked to the messages. "Let's say you're staying in a Ritz Carlton hotel somewhere in the world and you've posted a photo on Instagram to let everyone know that you've become engaged", said Scott Weisenthal, Vice President, Global Creative and Content Marketing, in an interview on inc.com, "a second later this comes up in our M Live Command Centre... we will then call the hotel and the hotel will send up a bottle of champagne"

By monitoring what guests share, Marriot can deploy personalized marketing communications and surprise customers, leading them to become loyal customers and begin spreading positive messages about the brand. Of course, this needs to be done both sensitively and legally to give every guest a personal and valuable experience at every point on their customer journey."

8.2 The Advantages and Disadvantages of Mobile Marketing

The vast possibilities of mobile marketing and advertising are apparent and people tend to use their mobile devices to shop and search for their favourite products more and more. Marketers use it extensively and decide to use the mobile as a place to launch their advertising campaigns (Antonios, 2018). The practicality of mobile devices brings out many advantages but some disadvantages need to be expressed as well.

Advantages of Mobile Marketing

Main advantages of mobile marketing are summarised below (Öztaş, 2015).

- Reaching a wider audience: Because mobile phones are accessed anytime anywhere, millions or even billions of users can get connected. This is a great way to market and brand your products.
- It is user-friendly: Advertisements even in their most basic form can attract attention and get clicked on by the users.
- Instant and measurable results: You can have real-time data to track down every little detail of your marketing campaign. The effectiveness of your advertising campaign can be measured and tracked with real-time data and the insight you get from mobile devices is more than in any other media. The precision in the response rate is highly accurate and the evaluation process of the campaign is tracked down in every detail.
- Segmentation and target markets: Mobile marketing can track down the preferences and tastes of users to aim to show more personalized results. It gives the market the opportunity for a more personalized advertising message, which is sent to segmented groups and target audiences, applying filters and sociodemographic traits.
- Viral Potential: If a post goes viral, eWoM gets increased and brand awareness is achieved. Mass communication is achieved.
- Interactivity: Interactivity and communication is achieved to generate interest in the products and services. The user/ potential customer can interact immediately with the business allowing them to find out more about the product or service advertised. This interaction between the user and the company can be utilized for a better definition of the needs and preferences of the user.
- Immediacy: The customer or the service provider can respond immediately.
- Driving local scale traffic: Mobile marketing offers the ability to generate traffic on a more local scale, a positive feature for small and medium enterprises. The vast majority of users search for shops and goods in the vicinity and local businesses should take advantage of it.

Disadvantages of Mobile Marketing

Main disadvantages of mobile marketing are listed below (Moats, 2020).

- Lack of professionals: Mobile marketing tools are countless and there isn't a big number of people specializing in that field. Its rise is so recent that there is a bit of lack of professionalism still among marketers, advertisers, or marketing companies. The skills and insight needed takes hard effort and most of all the wise use of its tools will take a long time to acquire.
- Privacy issues: Unfortunately, this is one of the biggest concerns among customers. Sometimes, people may feel uncomfortable sharing personal data for marketing purposes. The feeling of violation exists and prevails when the users' privacy is disrupted. Companies must consider any legal framework and legislation concerning privacy policies and data protection and ensure that their customer's information is protected and secured in any way.
- Tricky decision-making process: The operating systems and several mobile and web applications cause a high segmentation and fragment of the market. Thus, the process of reaching relevant and wise decisions becomes extremely difficult. Automatization appears as a really strong advantage that can become a big drawback in this case.
- Platforms are too diverse: Due to the abundance of platforms and the various choices the users have, you may have to customize your ad campaigns to get better and optimized results.

The challenges and drawbacks should be carefully considered for a successful marketing strategy and advertising campaign. The steps of the mobile marketing strategy should be followed correctly and then evaluated accurately to check if the campaign is efficient or not.

8.3 Mobile Consumer Behaviour and Mobile Commerce Opportunity

Mobile consumer behaviour refers to the behaviour and the tasks the users perform on their mobile devices. It is estimated that in 2021, the number of unique mobile internet users stood at 4.32 billion, indicating that over 90 percent of the global internet population use a mobile device to go online (www.statista.com). This

widespread adoption of smartphones and tablets and this excessive use has brought vast changes to the field of commerce and transactions. The emergence of a new form of commerce has appeared giving the ability for one- or two-way exchange of value facilitated by a mobile consumer's electronic device. It is called M-Commerce. The global mobile marketing market size was valued at USD 65.06 billion in 2019 and is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 22.9% from 2020 to 2027 (https://www.grandviewresearch.com/).

Travelers use mobile tools when they search for information about destinations, travel products and services. Apart from that, they use it to share their traveling experiences, feeling, and thoughts. Thus, a tourist's smartphone enables interactions between the user and both the virtual and physical world, without any regard for the current location of use. A tourist's smartphone not only plays an important role during the trip itself, but also influences the whole touristic experience deeply. Specifically, it is easy for them to plan activities on all three stages of a trip (pre-trip travel planning, en-route activities, and after-trip activities). Mobile tools have given them the most convenient solution along with flexibility during the trip. In a qualitative study by Wang, Xiang & Fesenmaier (2014, p.18), some respondents characteristically mentioned that: "*the smartphone appears to be an effective and handy tool to search for information regarding transportation, accommodation, dining, things to do during trips, travel ideas, deals both before and during trips.*"

8.4 Building a Mobile Marketing Strategy

When planning their mobile marketing strategy tourism and hospitality businesses should consider the following steps (Dodson, 2016, p.355):

1. **Opportunity**
2. **Optimize**
3. **Advertise**
4. **Analyse**

These four steps are crucial for the mobile marketing strategy to take over the desktop world and prevail on the Internet.

The first term "Opportunity" refers to the fact that marketers should exploit the vast opportunities that mobile marketing offers. Smartphones allow to reach a wider

audience really fast. Another benefit is the personal interaction and connection with your customers displaying engaging content. A further opportunity which is given, is immediate access since we carry our smartphones everywhere with us. The fact that we check our phones approximately 150 times a day (Dodson, 2016, p.356-357) which is pretty impressive, gives businesses the opportunity to reach them instantly. Another opportunity is the wide range of distribution channels a business can exploit. Apart from the opportunities, though, a wise marketer should also take the challenges into consideration. People have the power to express their opinion publicly on internet platforms and if it's negative then the business' image will be detrimentally affected. A negative electronic word of mouth (eWoM) can have a huge impact on the business. The other big challenge lies in the personalized side of mobile marketing. The engaging content and a more interactive experience take a big effort to achieve. Last but least, privacy policy issues may arise when it comes to this targeted and personalized side of mobile marketing.

The second step is the optimization of the content displayed on mobile platforms and applications. This stage focuses on the development of mobile sites and applications. It is essential to make sure about the optimization and adjustment of content and appearance of the company's website to a smaller screen, since users tend to search a lot on their mobile phones. Context is a key element when it comes to mobile marketing and when it comes to your mobile marketing strategy you should be careful. Determining and segmenting your audience as well as optimizing the content accordingly is really important:

- Mobile users: People who are on the move and want to perform tasks fast.
- Tablet users: Tablet is a supplementary means they use, probably while watching something else on TV or scrolling while on the couch.
- Desktop users: The screen is bigger and they probably use it to read.

Thus, adaptation to several screens is necessary. This is achieved by using the so-called adaptive/ responsive mobile sites. The benefits of mobile sites are plenty since they offer immediacy, compatibility and sustainability. They are easily found and upgraded, having a longer life cycle and are really cost-efficient.

The third stage refers to advertising. Advertising is all about letting people know about you. There are several ad formats that you can choose from, which are presented in the module on mobile advertising more analytically.

The fourth stage refers to the analysis of your mobile marketing strategy. Mobile phones track down every single detail and companies should take advantage of the metrics provided. Using the appropriate metrics and measuring the efficiency and effectiveness of the marketing campaign, it is possible to make new adjustments and optimisation to the content targeting a specific audience. For instance, Google Analytics, which is a great tool for metrics, has a separate tab for the mobile category. The insight someone gets is incredibly useful and the more you apply it to your mobile strategy, the more efficient adjustments and optimizations you will make.

The crucial questions to be answered when building a mobile marketing strategy are mentioned below (Visser, Sikkenga & Berry, 2021, p.351):

- ✓ What does the organization want to achieve?
- ✓ What is the current and future situation in the market? What are the opportunities and what are the threats?
- ✓ What are the possibilities and competencies of the organization in the technical, financial and organizational fields? What are their strong points and what are their weaknesses?
- ✓ What conclusions can be drawn from looking at these strengths and weaknesses concerning the opportunities and threats? What should the organization do to ensure lasting success in the future?
- ✓ How can the organization best segment the market and what choices does the organization make regarding target markets and positioning?
- ✓ What does the organization need to change to achieve this? Broadly speaking, what will the new marketing mix look like?
- ✓ What needs to happen in technical, financial and organizational terms to achieve this?

8.5 Mobile Marketing Communication Channels

Mobile marketing channels have been widely used in the last few years and as a result, they are changing the way tourists experience a destination, consume travel-related products, and share their travel experiences with others. Practitioners and marketers respond by adjusting their strategies and plans to accommodate changing consumer needs (Law, Chu Chan & Wand, 2018).

8.5.1 Mobile Optimized Website

Mobile optimized websites are already existing sites that make use of special optimization technologies such as JavaScript to adjust the content for mobile devices. The current trends in consumer behaviour show that users tend to search more on mobile phones than on their desktops (www.statista.com). The content of your website must be adjustable and fitting both on bigger screens and smaller ones.

The design of the website must be responsive which means that no matter how big a screen is, the website will still appear the same and fill the screen and the content clearly most common types of mobile websites are the following (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016, p.418):

- Simple mobile site (different content).
- Screen-scrape (same content).
- Responsive design (same content, different mobile styling).
- HTML5 site (same content, different mobile styling).
- Adaptive design (potentially different content, different styling on different mobile devices)

Simple mobile site: This is the fastest method to create a mobile site on a domain http:/m.company.com which has a different design, build, hosting and content. This is particularly good for very small businesses in tourism looking for a simple site without too many updates.

Screen- scrape: It is an option not frequently recommended due to the several long-term disadvantages. Specifically, “the screen-scrape option incurs additional time and cost to manage the site, as changes to the back-end content management system (CMS) will need to be updated manually on the mobile site, rather than benefiting from

automatic updates. Furthermore, a review of 'screen-scrape' sites reveals an alarming degree of standardization across the sites, which lack the differentiation brands demand across their PC websites" (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016, p.418).

Responsive web design: Many organizations start to recognize the importance of being updated and responsive web design is being widely adopted. Responsive web design (RWD) offers an efficient and practicable solution to address the plethora of different mobile devices with countless varying characteristics (scree-size, input, size, etc.) (Groth & Haslwanter, 2016, p.203). "Responsive design is an increasingly popular approach to building mobile sites since it enables a single version of the site and content to be maintained which adapts for different resolutions" (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016, p.418).

HTML5: Companies that are involved in retail, packaged goods, travel, financial services, and publishing, are turning to HTML5 'web apps' to build once and target all mobile platforms at once. This is more cost-effective and less labour-intensive than building different native apps for iOS, Android, Windows Phone and BlackBerry (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016, p.418).

Adaptive design: This is a hybrid version that combines several clients- and server-based logics to offer better performance and user experience without speed limitations. The main drawback is that development times and costs can be high. Thus, this version is suited mainly for larger businesses.

8.5.2 Mobile Applications

Mobile Applications are extremely popular and can be utilized for the best, especially if they are entertaining and informative. They are a great tool for mobile marketing. They can have great benefits if built correctly offering the following benefits:

1. They have utility value and they are designed to satisfy the customers' needs efficiently and fast.
2. Mobile applications can integrate with the functional system of any smartphone and use features like the GPS, the camera and the speakers providing an enhanced experience.
3. They are user-friendly offering introductory instructions to show the user how they work.

4. Immediacy and interactivity can be achieved fast. Users, nowadays, can be characterized as always on the go. Through an application, customers are reached straight away and is allowed to check information and go on a purchase really fast.
5. Applications do not always need internet access to work, as gaming apps do.
6. Mobile applications seem to protect and secure the personal user's information way better than web applications or e-commerce channels.

The above-mentioned elements are real benefits but when it comes to developing a mobile application for your business you need to take several things into account. The mobile application development process consists of some steps that are of the utmost importance:

- The first step has to do with the reason why you develop this application. Why do you need this app? You definitely need to define the reason why you develop the app so that you will engage your users. The reason should be clear and the type of app be specific to serve specific needs.
- The second step is the development/ building of the application. You should better hire a developer since they are experts in the field and they probably have similar experiences with such apps. Define how you want it to be like, check out similar apps and brainstorm.
- Try to submit a draft (earlier) version of your application to meet the requirements for your final launch.
- After the stage of development and launching you need to promote it. The competition is undeniable and since there are other applications like yours, you have to let people know you are there somehow. You can raise and generate interest on social media or send emails to customers who have expressed interest through your website and let them know.
- Constantly follow up on your activity. Get details of the activities going on in your application through Google Mobile Analytics. These details may include reports on how many people downloaded your app, how many times they opened it, how much time the users spend on it, what actions they perform etc.
- The last but really crucial step is to stay up-to-date. Every year, the application should be updated anyway since Google and Apple update

their operating systems. The change in Google's and Apple's operating systems is really important and plays a big role in the looks of your mobile application. Developing and launching an application is an on-going process that needs constant look up and upgrades.

8.5.3 Messaging and Chatbots

SMS (short message service) is another major channel and seems to be the most effective for already existing customers (Chaffey, 2017, p.353). Due to GDPR (Global Data Protection Regulation) the customers should first agree to be recipients of an SMS.

An important condition that must be met in each case is the structured form of the message in order to attract both attention as well as consumer understanding. So, the message should be simple, understandable, smart, fast, straightforward, and personal and not exceed 160 characters.

The MMS (multimedia messaging services) has also appeared gradually in the market, which, in contrast to SMS is enriched with audio and video, aiming for better results. However, one major disadvantage of MMS, is the fact that some devices do not have this application.

There are some very important factors that need to be taken into consideration when it comes to the efficiency of the SMS as a mobile marketing tool. These factors are listed below.

- ✓ The characteristics of the customers: Advertising companies should attract consumers whose characteristics are related to the characteristics of the target audience. In particular, -messages should be based on gender, age, educational level, socioeconomic status, etc.
- ✓ Cost of messaging from the customers to the company advertised: Customers may not want the bear the costs if they wish to answer back.
- ✓ Customers' needs and advertised product: The advertised product should be related to the needs of the customers.
- ✓ The product advertised: The characteristics and the cost of the product need to be clear and concise.
- ✓ Financial motive: The lower the cost of the product the more demand it will get.

In conclusion, there are plenty of benefits concerning the use of SMS such as:

- The low cost
- High efficiency
- Wide range
- Bulk messaging
- Reliability
- Easy implementation
- Direct delivery

Text bots or chat bots are computer programs that make conversations via text or auditory methods. They are considered particularly accurate to define voice and text requests and they respond in a human-like manner, using AI (artificial intelligence). They are claimed to be useful for business too, since they collect feedback from customers, they respond to questions and requests immediately and engage customers with upcoming events and news about the business.

Text bot is a tool that businesses use to send automated text messages. The text-based systems offer important benefits and can be exploited by businesses due to the following reasons:

1. Along with chatbots, text messaging tools provide immediacy and responsiveness to users.
2. They are cost-effective and affordable
3. Text messaging systems do not require the user to download an application
4. Text messaging systems and chatbots use interfaces that people make daily use of.

Text messages become more and more widely used for mobile marketing campaigns, especially when it comes to an upcoming event and promotional content of the business. In general, text applications can be of great use in the tourism industry. Tour operators, travel agencies, airlines, car rental companies or hotel groups, great restaurants, bed and breakfasts and rental companies of all kinds use text messaging systems to achieve a number of actions. Characteristically, messaging is a great tool to use in the following occasions (Eagan, 2022):

- Sending the travel itineraries to the smartphone, mainly by MMS.

- Confirmation of purchases and reservations (hotel reservations, airline reservations, etc.).
- Schedule change announcement.
- Announcement of a flight delay, bus departure delay.
- Announcement of flight cancellation, cancellation of a special offer, cancellation of a trip.
- Use of SMS as an electronic ticket.
- Announcement of lost luggage, hotel room ready, change of circuit.
- Broadcasting of the promotions not to be missed.
- Broadcasting of weather warnings and potential problems or unforeseen events such as traffic jams, road accidents on the planned route.
- Sending welcome, thank you and best wishes messages to customers.
- Broadcasting offers last minute or limited time.
- Customer reminders.
- Tips on how to prepare for a trip, what not to do when visiting a foreign territory.

8.5.4 QR Codes and Mobile Coupons

Quick Response codes (QR) codes is another upcoming trend in mobile marketing channels. QR is a two-dimensional barcode used for adding web links to a printed page. Through QR codes the user accesses a website straight away. “Quick Response codes are codes used to track and price several goods and they can hold and share data. They work in a similar way as barcodes and have become a really useful tool for mobile marketing. These codes allow smartphone users to access sites instantly offering an enhanced mobile experience” (Chaffey, 2017, p.353). QR codes contain data used to point towards your hotel website or any other form of information you want to provide to your hotel guests. QR Codes have taken the hospitality industry by storm – most rapidly during the Covid-19 crisis – and can be seen used anywhere from restaurants menus to playing a role in sharing information about health and safety measures. (eHotelier, 2021)

Here are some ways that QR codes can be used for a marketing campaign:

- Drive customers to the business website and offer them speed to access your site.

- Use QR codes in business conferences so potential new partners can scan the code and find out more about the goods and services you offer.
- Use QR codes to send emails and get reports for your business' email performance rates. Use QR codes and direct your customers to download your application.
- QR codes can be used as a supplementary tool for the SMS marketing channel. Right after a QR code is scanned, the customer receives an SMS. This SMS can be about several offers or sales and discounts, product upgrades or user support.
- Use QR codes to offer discounts and promotional messages for your company. Send the receipt or the menu, in the case you are a restaurant owner directly to your customers.

Overall, QR codes save a lot of time and energy for both the customer and the business. Basic settings like location, time zone and frequency must be set and the metrics should be taken into consideration in order to manage better marketing results. Nowadays, it would be difficult to imagine a restaurant or hotel visit without seeing a QR code on display. "Anywhere you will see this recognizable signage being used for informative reasons or marketing purposes. Providing a quick and easy method to access information, QR codes offer great opportunities for hotels to drive revenue, record guest preferences, and improve guest experience by providing useful information to guests throughout the property" (eHotelier, 2021).

As for the mobile coupons these are coupons which consumers receive electronically via their mobile devices. 'A mobile coupon is an electronic ticket solicited and/or delivered by mobile phone that can be exchanged for a financial discount or rebate when purchasing a product or service' (Mobile Marketing association, 2007, p.1). They have become one of the fastest growing promotion methods for retailers, hoteliers and business managers in tourism.

8.5.7 Augmented Reality

The term augmented reality “blends real-world digital data capture, typically with a digital camera in a webcam or mobile phone, to create a browser-based digital representation or experience mimicking that of the real world” (Chaffey, 2017, p.659). In other words, “the term describes the visual alignment of virtual content with a real-world context” (Scholz, 2018, p.12). By augmented reality, virtual images are created by computers and these images could be superimposed onto physical objects in real time.

It can be used for mobile marketing in order to increase and boost engagement and give the customer an enhanced unique experience before actual purchase of a product. In order to use it you must determine your target audience and think if augmented reality features fit it. Augmented Reality works by tracking faces at a time and then creating augmented reality experiences for the user.

ARKit is an augmented reality development platform created by Apple, which displays content in front or behind the user. In order to create augmented reality features there is the tool of Reality Composer or AR Quick Look. ARCore is developed by Google and enables the detection of the features of environment, such as light estimation and motion tracking.

Through ARKit and ARCore augmented reality features have become more accessible for marketers to use in their marketing strategies offering the users a more satisfying and enhanced experience.

The increased awareness and use of these technologies, have changed travel behaviour by revolutionizing the way in which tourists search for information, make decisions purchase tourism products and services, find and explore reviews and so on (Cranmer, Tom Dieck & Fountoulaki, 2020). Adopting AR in the tourism context can enhance travellers’ experiences, improve their attitude, and increase their positive behavioural intention. Augmented reality empowers tourists to explore unfamiliar surroundings, and offers them interesting and valuable information to enhance their experience. Also, by integrating 3D information in the real environment, users are able to interact with the device through hand gestures, gaze and voice commands. Thus, more memorable, engaging and authentic images are generated to the visitor.

A great example is Marriott Hotels, which launched an AR app to help guests explore the Caribbean, Mexico Resorts (www.hospitalitytech.com). The Portal to Paradise app, gives potential travellers the chance to explore and uncover a new destination from the palm of their hand. To find out more, watch the video below: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KeedM5QkMtE

8.5.8 Location-based and Proximity Mobile Marketing

Location-based mobile marketing helps the businesses communicate with users of mobile phones within a specific location. Smartphone users, who have their location services turned on, can get content, alerts, and push notifications from a business through location-based mobile marketing within a predefined location (https://www.webfx.com/digital-marketing/learn/location-marketing/). In location-based marketing, a message is sent to the mobile devise when a user enters or exits a predefined geolocation or geo-fenced location. It is a cost-efficient mobile marketing channel and uses the location of a device to show targeted content. The term 'Geolocation' or 'Geofencing' is really important in the field of mobile marketing. It refers to the ability to track down the location of your customers, what they are searching for and what they do on your applications (Dodson, 2016, p.392). Location-based mobile marketing uses mobile apps, wireless technology and built-in global positioning system (GPS) in mobile devices to show exactly where the device is located. Geolocation data can range from relatively broad to pretty specific.

Proximity marketing is a granular type of location based marketing where more specific location of the mobile device users is determined and timely, relevant and personal communication is possible with users (https://blog.beaconstac.com/2017/06/location-based-marketing-vs-proximity-marketing/). Proximity marketing is based on beacons, near field communication and Wi-Fi technologies. A beacon is a small device that receives location information via Bluetooth-enabled smartphones. Bluetooth beacons are Bluetooth radio transmitters which are powered by batteries. They are considered hardware devices which instantly transmit Bluetooth signals. It can be utilized by several types of businesses such as hotels, store-front stores, restaurants, event venues and so on in order to display relevant advertising content. Bluetooth advertisements can have different formats, such as text, pictures, audio, video and even games. However, there are plenty of

limitations with the major one being that the customer should be in close proximity and have their Bluetooth mode on. The beacons are displayed in the shop, maybe in the entrance. Their ranges vary from 20 to 300 meters and signals are transmitted to the devices of the customers. Then the smartphone device sends an ID number, which is attached to the Bluetooth signal, to the cloud server of the phone. The server responds and a notification from the shop is displayed. Via this notification the user can visit the website or get in touch with the shop.

Apple has created Bluetooth Low Energy beacons. The so-called iBeacons are BLE, relying on wireless technology and providing information and services to iPhones and other devices with iOS operating system. Apps which are installed on the users' iPhone accept the signal transmitted by these beacons and respond accordingly when the phone comes into the range of the beacon.

The Facebook beacon is a small device which can be placed in the shop or office of your business enabling people to get more information about the goods and services of the business when customers use Facebook when they walk in. Business reviews, news, events, offers and discounts and other promotional content of the business can be displayed.

Eddystone is a beacon format designed by Google. It functions for both Android and iOS operating systems. It is open and the four types of data this beacon can display are the following:

- Eddystone-URL for broadcasting URL addresses: When the device approaches, the user gets a notification with a link of the business
- Eddystone-UID for broadcasting beacons IDs: This type contains an identifier of the beacon. It uses Namespace and Instance. The application on the device uses this ID to complete an action
- Eddystone-TLM for beacon telemetry information. For example, battery voltage.
- Eddystone-EID for security: Eddystone EID is the secure variant of Eddystone UID. It's a way of making sure that only your own app will be able to recognize the beacon and serve content based on its distinct Namespace and Instance

Foursquare is a social media site that can improve the online presence of a company. It can be considered as a heavily trafficked and expanding network with its users rising sharply. It works like that:

- The Foursquare users “check in”.
- The users then have the ability to rate the local businesses they visited and the share their opinion and rating with other friends online.

The benefits of location-based and proximity mobile marketing are the following (Mobile Ecosystem Forum, 2019):

1. Geolocation tracking and geo-targeting is an easy task. It is cost-effective and efficient tool.
2. The application engagement is boosted and your advertising campaign becomes more efficient.
3. The company increases the click-through-rate of the company.
4. Brand loyalty and customer’s experience is enhanced.
5. By adopting proximity marketing, you increase revenue and become more competitive. Target your audience carefully and create an interactive environment for them.
6. Immediate conversions are increased. Proximity marketing helps you achieve your goals on conversions. Enticing offers and discounts at the right time to the right audience you can increase engagement and drive more sales.
7. Proximity marketing gives the user a more personalized experience.
8. You do not need to develop an application.
9. Retargeting in proximity marketing is achieved.

As in any marketing campaign, the business should not forget the three fundamentals which are:

- Segment and target your audience.
- Create engaging content that catches the attention of the user.
- Evaluate and consider the metrics.

The first step to utilize the GPS in your mobile marketing strategy is to register your shop’s address with search engines and websites which own location-based business lists. A brief and accurate description of your company, goods and services must be included in order for the customers to see what you offer immediately. Depending on the engine you use you can also target your market and show specific offers and discounts to users who are near your business.

Another important tool based on location is Google Business Profile. It is a free tool that can be utilized by SMEs to manage their mobile presence on Google. Naturally, it does not replace your company’s website but it completes it by increasing

and improving its online image and brand's identity. The information about your business will appear in Google Search and Google Maps too. The steps to create a Google Business Profile listing include the following:

1) Input the official name of your business and define your business category. Defining your business category is really important since this is the category the users will search for. Make sure that the most relevant category is chosen.
2) Define the location your business can be accessed.
3) Insert contact information for your business, such as your phone number and the URL code of your website.
4) Set your exact address.
5) Clarify if you offer services outside the exact place of your business and if so, add the information asked.
6) Click Finish.
7) Verify your Google Business Profile listing. Google will not display your company unless you verify it.

When it comes to Google Business Profile there are some really helpful tips which can be followed:

- The data for your listing must be entered accurately. Keep in mind that the more accurate your information, the easier you will be reached.
- Include important and relevant keywords and search phrases for your business.
- The business hours you add on the information should be kept accurately and if something comes up, remember to update them.
- Add photos to make it more engaging and attractive.
- Manage and respond as quickly as possible to your customers reviews and requests.
- Enable customers to message you and contact you. You can customize your own automated responses for several and different cases. This way your responsiveness and reactiveness are increased and customers feel more satisfied.

Google Business Profile can be proven really helpful especially for SMEs since it offers great immediacy to reach and targeted audience.

Foursquare offers a business the opportunity to earn brand recognition and generate familiarity within its viewers. The more “check-ins” your business get the more interest you generate and cultivate the ground for more customers. You should be careful you offer high quality of goods and services since a negative eWoM can have serious impact on your business. One of the greatest tools that Foursquare offers is the one of “specials” and “deals”. This way, the marketer can offer deals and discount coupons to those who check in.

Yelp has become a very powerful tool for mobile location-based marketing strategies. It is strongly connected with Social-Local Mobile strategies (SoLoMo) and users utilize the Yelp application to purchase locally. Yelp is a great place for small and medium businesses and enterprises since local mobile strategies thrive on it. On-the-go bookings and appointments, instant bookings, local search, public reviews are some of the great features that Yelp displays. Customers’ engagement is encouraged and brand awareness and loyalty are built. It must be said that Yelp seems to compete with Google’s local services and Foursquare, since they offer similar benefits.

8.5.9 Social Network Advertising

Mobile social media marketing is an essential part of mobile marketing and of the biggest forces in the field right now. More and more people start using social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn. Social Network advertising is mostly related to content promotion. “Exactly because of this increase in using social media worldwide, it is no longer enough for organizations to rely on free organic engagement methods on social media. Organic content published by organizations on social media competes with ever-increasing numbers of contributions from other organizations and other users” (Heinze, Fletcher, Rashid & Cruz, 2021, p.269). This is a new form of advertising used to describe a way of online advertising content based and focused on social networking sites. Advertising on networking sites offers great advantages to businesses which adopt this marketing tool, which include the following (Gope, 2012):

- Increased awareness of the organization.
- Increased traffic to website.
- Greater favourable perceptions of the brand.

- Able to monitor conversations about the organization.
- Able to develop targeted marketing activities.
- Better understanding of customers perceptions of their brand.
- Improved insights about their target markets.
- Identification of positive and negative comments.
- Increase in new business.
- Identification of new product or service opportunities.
- Ability to measure the frequency of the discussion about the brand.
- Early warning of potential product or service issues.

Tips on social network-based advertising and content optimization for a mobile marketing campaign can be seen on https://www.blog.udonis.co/mobile-marketing/mobile-marketing-and-social-media.

8.5.10 Mobile Gaming

Another medium in mobile marketing is mobile gaming advertising. It has been scarcely studied, but the value of mobile gaming in mobile marketing seems really increased in the last years. The definition of mobile game advertising is a game application used by a company for advertising purposes in a mobile handset of a customer. The customer downloads mobile games for free, but allows the service provider to download advertisements to the game or show adverts while downloading the game or during the gaming session itself, depending on the game and context. There are four types of mobile games (Salo, 2009):

- Mobile advertising games.
- Mobile games sponsorship.
- Mobile in-game advertising.
- Mobile games.

A plain mobile game contains no ads or unintentional promotional content. Mobile advertising games are deliberately designed as advertisements with promotional content. In-game advertising refers to placing advertisements of brands in mobile games. In-gaming, advertising should have engaging and dynamic content. They are the most important type raising the brand's engagement and involvement.

As far as the field of tourism is concerned the area of utilizing mobile games is emerging. A great example is the Dublin Augmented Reality Project in Ireland. "*With this innovative project, Dublin aimed to be the first European city to implement an AR infrastructure, not only benefiting tourists but also its citizens and other stakeholders*." "The application of augmented reality was applied via tourist trails in several parts of the destination chosen. Through the gaming platform, the tourists were able to read information of the place and even hear stories from the past. This gave the tourists an incredible and amusing experience, giving them more emotions" (Feifei Xu, 2015, p.2).

8.5.11 Near Field Communication and Mobile Payments

New technologies and digitalization of life are shaping the ways of doing business as well as the behaviours of consumers (Aydın & Burnaz, 2016). As mobile phones keep developing more and more so do the marketing strategies. Mobile payments have become very common throughout the world and their adoption by the marketers is an essential tool for their marketing strategies. The term mobile payment/ mobile transfer/ mobile wallet refers to payment services operated under financial regulation and performed from or via a mobile device.

In a technical sense, near field communication (NFC) is a short-range wireless communication technology which is evolved from Radio Frequency Identification (RFID). NFC enables convenient short-range communication between electronic devices (Pesonen & Horster, 2012, p.5). 'NFC mobile payments are contactless digital payment options that allow phones, tablets, or credit cards to communicate with NFC-enabled readers. NFC technology allows businesses to accept customer payments quickly and conveniently without requiring employees to handle or cards' (Treece, 2022, p.1). NFC has been predicted to be one of the major pioneering technologies and it can potentially have a huge impact on tourism businesses. NFC offers tourism many useful applications, deserving greater attention from tourism researchers and professionals. It is a fact that potential travellers are using mobile devices before the trip, during the trip and after the trip. Apart from mobile payments, more and more ways to use mobile devices in travel and tourism are developed continuously, making the topic very important from a tourism management perspective. Some of the advantages of NFC are summarised below (Ok, Coskun, Audin & Ozdenizci, 2010):

1) Mobile devices can be used both for information storage and as an NFC reader.
2) This technology is compatible with existing RFID structures, tags and contactless cards.
3) Extremely user friendly as the users are not required to have any insight on technology.
4) Inherent security is provided due to the short transmission range.

Near field communication mobile payments can be considered as a big opportunity for marketers and the reason lies in the fact that customers are able to make their purchases quickly and easily. It is a really inexpensive means for the business to reach a wide base of audience and create a strong and trustworthy relationship. The biggest concern that surrounds the adoption their holistic adoption is the fact that they are considered still a little bit insecure. This consideration, which may be wrong, creates a big barrier in their adoption since many customers are still reluctant to use their mobile wallet.

8.6 Mobile Search Optimization

Mobile search engine optimization (SEO) connects the search engine optimization of websites with the flawless viewing on mobile devices' screens. More and more people tend to prefer their mobile phones to search for good and services. Thus, mobile search optimization should be taken seriously from marketers. SEO can be a huge competitive tool in many business sectors where potential customers are looking for brands, products and solutions. To gain more visibility you need to rank highly in the organic search results pages (SERPs) for the search terms the users are looking for (Chaffey, 2017).

According to Google, the mobile websites typically function through three configurations: Responsive Web Design, Dynamic Serving and Separate URLs. When responsive web designed is used, the mobile device will have the same HTML code and content for the very same URL regadless of the device chosen. There are many benefits using Responsive Web Design since sharing content from the same URL becomes easy. Google will be able to easily index the single URL for higher seach

engine listings and it will be more convinient to keep multiple pages with the same content.

Dynamic Servings are created to get the server respond with different HTML and CSS code on the same URL depending on the device of the user. In order to do this, the web designer needs to use the Vary HTTP header so as to signal changes on the page requests of the user-agent. The appropriate and valid headers will tell the browser how to adjust and display the content.

When it comes to Separate URLs, the name speaks on its own. Separate URLs configuration suggest having separate URLs for your website in order to display the content succesfully on the several mobile devices. Each URL has a different HTML code for every single screen size.

Mobile SEO differs from the typical SEO on desktops. The goals maybe similar and comparable but the way to reach audiences differs. Through desktop SEO, businesses mainly focus on the genral public while on mobile SEO the focus on users who are closer in proximity. The users' experience in mobile SEO is more personalized and targeted while it is more generalized on the deskop. The main difference in mobile and desktop seach engine optimization lies on the fact that the results people get after their serach are deifferent. Even in mobile SEO, the results may be different depending on the use of tablet or mobile phone. Mobile results can vary depending on the device of the user and their location, which plays a significant role. Good positioning and rakning on desktop does not always mean the same for the results on mobile devices. Thus, it is essential to keep an eye on the analytics and reports on your mobile campaigns since mobile and desktop are two separate things.

The key elements for a successful mobile search optimization include the following (Diamond, 2019, p.599).

- Concentrate on the users' experience. The mobile site and content must be user-friendly and enjoyable at the same time.
- Make important features clickable, such as the main menu and the phone number of the company.
- Go for local SEO and focus on local audiences.
- Optimize your mobile content and make it easiers for users to write and read in small screens.

- Meta descriptions and titles should be briefer and more accurate. If they are too long like on the desktop, they won't appear properly.
- Use voice search.

Mobile search optimization has become an important past of SEO due to the sharp rise of mobile device usage. Mobile SEO gives the right content to the right person at the right time and mobile traffic has skyrocketed. The countless advantages of mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets are undeliable and need to be take into consideration when it comes to building a marketing strategy.

8.7 Mobile Advertising

Global brands and millions of businesses use a new type of advertising in their media mix, mobile advertising which ends up dominating the advertising industry. With mobile advertising everything is trackable and measurable. The benefits it offers are obvious and more and more SMEs start adopting it for their advertising campaigns. The mobile advertising tool can help a company achieve main business goals, such as driving more sales and generating interest and awareness. Secondly, mobile advertising gives the people the opportunity to find out more information about a product and thus recognition is gained. Furthermore, another obvious advantage it helps the business engage more and more people and target to wider audiences. The interaction with customers has proven incredibly vital for businesses since it increases the popularity of the brand. In general, crucial marketing goals can be achieved pretty fast since people have the tendency to use the mobile devices anytime anywhere.

The mobile advertisement should attract the user's attention and generate interest. Features like engaging messages, compelling design or even the inclusion of a competition may catch the eye of the user and make users click on the ad. The most common mobile ad formats are the Expandable Mobile Banner Ads and the Interactive Mobile Video Advertisements.

- Expandable Mobile Banner Ad: This is an ad format that when it is clicked it expands and takes over the whole space of the user's phone.
- Interactive Mobile Video Ad: This ad format offers the opportunity to display a video. This mobile video banner when it is clicked the video of the ad plays right

away using the speakers of the device. This definitely catches the attention of the viewer and offers a more interactive experience.

Whichever ad format a business uses, though, the content of the ad should be compelling and engaging to drive the viewer complete an action. For instance, if there is a hotel that uses a mobile expandable banner then the viewer should have the ability to reserve a room. Thus, after the ad is clicked on, some functional buttons are needed in order to give your viewers the capability to move on actions.

The places where your mobile ad can appear vary. The most common ways to advertise your product or service on mobile devices are the following (Dodson, 2016, p.386- 389):

1) Mobile search: According to Google statistics, in 10 countries (including the USA and Japan) the daily searches from mobiles are more than the ones on desktops.
2) In-App ads: When you download an application, these ads are included. This is also one of the most common ways that application developers monetize their free apps. The advertiser has the ability to target their audience even more since they can decide in which application, they wish their ad to be in.
3) Mobile sites: Create an engaging content to avoid the chance that users may ignore it.
4) Branded applications: An informative and entertaining application of the company's brand which provides information and functional buttons for the customers.
5) Mobile social networks: Decide the right network to advertise according to your budget.
6) WIFI: Use your free WIFI to get your customers sign up. This way customers will be engaged and informed about offers and discounts and upcoming events etc. It can be considered as one of the most cost-efficient mobile advertising strategies.

There are some key elements for a successful mobile advertising strategy. First of all, you need to carefully consider the place/destination of your campaign. The main question to answer is "where will you drive people?" You can either drive your customers to your website or urge them to download your application. Secondly, think

about using expandable ads that allow the viewers to call you, watch an engaging video or ask them to follow you the social media. Another helpful element is the A/B test for your ads. Try different ad forms and test which one works better for you. Last but least, a company should always retarget. Retargeting has been excessively used in desktop advertising but it is getting more and more popular on mobiles too. Interact with your old customers that have expressed an interest to your services and products and gives them the opportunity to get back to you.

8.8 Wearable Technology and Mobile Marketing

Wearable technologies (WTs) that come into our lives together with technological developments, internet, and intense competitive environment, play an important role in the digital transformation of the tourism sector (Cobanoglu, Dogan, Berezina & Galen Collins, 2021). Wearable technology includes gadgets that we usually wear in our daily lives such as smartwatches, heating jackets, heart-rate wrist bands, body cameras or rucksacks with built-in WiFi hotspots. Tech companies and manufacturers work hard to meet the demands of tourists for travel experiences.

The usage of wearable technology revolutionizes tourist behaviour and the tourism industry itself by giving added value for both suppliers and consumers. A lot of tourist agents are now utilizing virtual reality technology, for example, to give their customers an immersive view of their destination, hotel accommodation or overall tour perks. Augmented reality embodied on wearable devices, enables people to visit cities, tourist attractions and hotel resorts virtually without having to go there. Virtual experiences make the travel experience more appealing and engaging and create more authentic pictures.

Also, some airlines have developed applications that support wearable technology like for example smart watches. These applications enable easy boarding with smartwatches or smartphones instead of holding actual boarding passes. This way, boarding and check-in processes are sped up. The next time someone travels through Heathrow Airport, they can expect to see new Apple Watch-friendly, barcode scanners, called “Scan and Go”, in Terminals 3 and 5, as British Airways announced. Smartwatches enable tourists to receive push up notifications about their flights or their hotel, to confirm their booking or even pay their check-out bill.

Furthermore, body cameras enable tourists to capture the perfect time lapse with their body cameras. Take people who do winter sports, for example, and they love to film their adventurous moments. Skiers just have to fix them on their skiing suits and voila so filming adventurous skiing memories and breath-taking time-lapses on high mountains becomes a child's play! In other words, the above mentioned examples enhance travellers' experience, make it smarter and more secure. The introduction of wearable technology generates revenue and it seems that it is here to stay.

For the latest wearable technology, you can watch the following video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78DtfUXydv4

8.9 Mobile Code of Conduct

The Mobile Association is responsible to lead the growth of mobile marketing and its associated technologies, establishing clear guidelines and practices for the sustainable growth of mobile channels. It clearly stated that full potential of mobile marketing will be achieved only by setting strong guidelines about mobile data and privacy issues. The "Code of Conduct" is a code developed by the Mobile Association and serves the purpose to protect and secure the privacy standards. This code clearly describes the privacy principles for mobile marketers who advertise their goods and services, making use of the users' information (Mobile Marketing Association, 2008).

- Notice: Notice is the first topic developed in the code. The users should be provided with an earlier notice about the marketing program. The information about it must be sufficient and the marketer's identity and services must be clear to the user.
- Choice and Consent: The marketers should respect the right of the user to control what messages they receive on their mobile phones. They must ask the users if they wish to receive messages. This permission by the user is achieved through website registration, SMS, voice response or other legitimate methods. The consent is given for a specific marketing program and purpose. Thus, the marketer, should use this consent only for the very program they conduct.
- Customization: One of the key elements for a successful mobile marketing program is the customized content. Mobile marketers should make sure that the strategy they follow reflects broad customer expectations in any market

worldwide. They continuously collect information to target their audience but it must be ensured that the information collected is handled correctly and sensitively in compliance with the national legislation framework.

- Constraint: Constraint is achieved when marketers target and limit mobile messages.
- Security: Appropriate technical, administrative and physical procedures for the better data protection of users must be implemented.

8.10 Measuring and Analysing Mobile Marketing Performance

One of digital marketing's greatest charms is that the process is measurable from beginning to end. However, in order to properly monitor and fine-tune the digital marketing activities, organizations must determine in advance what the key performance indicators (KPIs) are. These are the indicators that they use to assess whether their digital marketing activities are successful. When implementing a mobile marketing strategy, the marketers should know if their efforts are working. It is a fundamental tool in order to move on with their campaigns and make adjustments to make the best out of their marketing strategy. It is undeniable that more and more businesses started developing applications to advertise and promote the goods and services they offer. Through applications the behaviour and actions of the users are trackable. The use of key performance indicators provides the marketers with metrics and insight about the data collected from the user and as a result the marketing strategy's performance is indicated, measured and analysed. Below are the some of the most used KPIs for mobile apps and websites.

- Conversion rate indicator is used in order to show metrics on the number of sales that have been made on the mobile website of the business.
- Retention rate indicator lets the marketer know the percentage of customers they retain. This is a very helpful tool to see the number of customer losses.
- Daily active users (DAU) refer to each individual who uses the application of the business.
- Monthly active users (MAU) is another metric to show the business the number of users in a period of 30 days.
- Daily sessions per daily active users shows how many times the users go on the application and use it. It is very common for users to download applications

but they rarely use them. This application activation rate shows how often your application is used.

- Return rate shows the rate the users come back to use the application.
- Cost per acquisition (CPA) is a marketing metric the measures the cost to acquire one paying customers on a marketing channel. It is a really important measurement for a successful marketing strategy since it directly measures the revenue impact of the mobile marketing campaign.
- Lifetime value (LTV) or customer lifetime value (CLV) is another significant metric to measure and analyse mobile marketing performances. It calculates the total predictable repeat purchase rate over the lifetime they spend being engaged with your brand. In the case the customer buys only once, then the "Return On an Ad Spend" rate (ROAS) does not increase.
- Traffic by source refers to the measurement of your prospects and where they come from.
- Traffic by device indicates types of devices used by visitors the mobile app or website.
- Mobile website positioning indicates the rank and position in the results displayed on google. The desktop pages results differ from the ones on mobiles so a constant and careful monitoring of both is vital
- Subscription rate refers to the number of people who have subscribed to the newsletter of your business through your mobile website.

Overall, KPIs both in mobile and digital marketing are essential to monitor the performance of a marketing strategy. These indicators are vital to define if the company is approaching its goals and the appropriate tools and channels are utilized. Measurement and analysis of performance gives marketers the opportunity to redefine their goals, target their audience in a better way, optimize their mobile website content and eventually raise their brand awareness, sales and loyalty.

8.11 Conclusion

The rapid growth of mobile users has immensely affected the marketing strategies of SMTEs. Marketers have to deal with several channels such as their mobile website, SMS, social media, application development and ads displayed on their apps and networks. Augmented reality features and mobile games in the sector of tourism offer entertainment and engage the consumers, visitors and tourists more and more. The engaging and personalized advertising contents in combination with features and applications that segment the audience are key elements for a successful marketing strategy. The interactivity is another key word when it comes to mobile advertising and it needs to be seriously taken into consideration by the marketers.

All of the above-mentioned mobile channels mentioned “are changing the way tourists experience a destination, consume travel-related products, and share their travel experiences with others. Practitioners and marketers respond by adjusting their strategies and plans to accommodate changing consumer needs” (Law, Chu Chan & Wand, 2018).

Mobile phones keep on tracking users’ activities and collect huge amounts of personal data. The challenge for businesses lies on the appropriate and sensitive use of this information. A possible misuse of users’ data may result in ruining brand image, sales, and brand loyalty. The code of conduct needs to be applied in any case the marketers wish to make use of personal information to reach an audience. Careful monitoring of the marketing campaign as well as KPIs implementation are vital for the success of a marketing strategy and SMETs should keep a constant eye on it.

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Supplementary Resources

- “The Mobile Marketing Trends You Need to Know About in 2020” see link below: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZgmlggOZL-Y
- “Mobile Commerce” see link below: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fdt5rRgimao
- “SMS In Mobile Marketing – Tutorial” See link below: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fG8hFF0ObM
- “Mobile Marketing Association: Code of Conduct” open link below: https://www.mmaglobal.com/files/codeofconduct.pdf
- Marketing Efforts Related to Social Media Channels and Mobile Application Usage in Tourism: Case Study in Istanbul: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mehmet_Gulbahar3/publication/282556751_Marketing_Efforts_Related_to_Social_Media_Channels_and_Mobile_Application_Usage_in_Tourism_Case_Study_in_Istanbul/links/5c2f5a8692851c22a3595515/Marketing-Efforts-Related-to-Social-Media-Channels-and-Mobile-Application-Usage-in-Tourism-Case-Study-in-Istanbul.pdf
- “Mobile Marketing Measurement | Mobile Marketing Tutorial | Simplilearn” see link below: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zk7B_ABUEpQ

Assessment Questions

1) Which of the following is **not** an advantage of mobile marketing

   a. You reach a wide audience

   b. You get measurable results

   c. It is easy to choose the right application

   d. You drive local traffic

2) Which of the following is **not** a step for planning a mobile marketing strategy

   a. Optimization
   b. Advertising
   c. Analysis
   d. Security

3) Geolocation or Geofencing uses _____ to show exactly where the device is located.

a. Proximity marketing **b) Global Positioning Satellite** c) HTML5 d) QR Codes

4) The metric that refers to the number of visitors to a website that complete a desired goal out of the total number of visitors is called _____.

a. DAU (Daily Active Users) b) MAU (Monthly Active Users) c) **Conversion Rate** d) CPA (Cost Per Acquisition) e) CLV (Customer Lifetime Value)

5) Mobile applications can't integrate with all functional systems of any smartphone.

a) True **b) False**

6) Quick Response Codes (QR Codes) can be used as a supplementary tool for the SMS marketing channel.

a) True b) False

7) Put the following steps of the mobile marketing strategy in order.

A) Advertise

B) Optimise

C) Opportunity

D) Analyse

a) CDBA b) **CBAD** c) ACDB d)BCDA

8) Put the principle of the Code of Conduct in order

A) Choice and Consent

B) Customization

C) Constraint

D) Security

E) Notice

a) **EABCD** b) DCABE c) AEBCD d) EBADC

9) Please match the concepts on the left with the correct definitions on the right.

1.Mobile Optimized Website	a. A two-dimensional barcode used for adding web links to a printed page.
2.Near Field Communication (NFC)	b. Existing websites that make use of special optimization technologies to adjust the content for mobile devices
3.Quick Response (QR) Codes	c. A communication technology that enables convenient short-range communication between electronic devices
4. Augmented Reality	d. Visual alignment of virtual content with a real-world context

a) **1b, 2c, 3a, 4d** b) 1d, 2a, 3b, 4c c) 1d, 2c, 3a, 4b d) 1c, 2d, 3a, 4b

10) Please match the concepts with the correct definitions.

Chatbots	a. Radio transmitters which instantly transmit Bluetooth signals
Mobile marketing	b. The process of marketing to consumers using smartphones and tablets
Beacons	c. Computer programs that conduct online conversations with users via text or voice
Proximity marketing	d. A specific type of location based marketing where more specific location of the mobile device users is determined and marketing messages are sent

a) 1c, 2a., 3b, 4d b) 1d, 2c, 3a, 4b **c) 1c, 2b, 3a, 4d** d) 1a, 2c, 3d, 4b

Module 9: Email Marketing for Small and Medium Sized Tourism and Enterprises

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Learning Objectives

After reading this module, the reader will be able to:

- understand email marketing and related concepts;
- tell email types in the context of marketing, their goals and differences;
- identify the benefits and disadvantages of email marketing;
- sort steps for managing an email marketing campaign;
- recognise do's and don'ts of email marketing;
- remember some of the most used email marketing software.

9.0 Introduction

The idea of using email in marketing emerged in the 1990s, with the rise of the popularity of the internet. The use of email has become widespread as the most economical and effective method to communicate with potential customers (Ryan, 2011). It has been one of the methods used by companies to create awareness about themselves, inform about their innovations and products, sell and provide support services. Businesses may easily interact personally with customers utilizing email marketing and a well-known digital channel. It goes without saying that choosing the appropriate strategy and content for your email marketing communications is essential. If your mass marketing campaign even makes it to your customer's inbox, it will almost definitely be ignored. The same goes for anything that looks like email spam (HSMAI, 2018). In the context of travel and tourism, the major aim of email marketing is guiding visitors through their digital journey from awareness to booking and thereafter generating brand advocacy. Email marketing is a critical component of digital customer relationship management strategy and promotion mix and it is a direct online channel strategy of tourism and hospitality businesses. Tourism businesses must continually

look out for new visitors, engaging with present guests, and keeping in touch with previous clients, who are the most likely to come back again since they are already familiar with the product. Email marketing serves a variety of these purposes, and it is crucial to figure out when to deliver the proper message to your visitors (HSMAI, 2018). Email can still be a useful and effective marketing medium that offers genuine value to both your consumers and your business, despite the prevalence of spam and the fact that most people's inboxes are now inundated with irrelevant and unwanted information (Ryan, 2011).

This module will give information about the basics of email marketing including the definition, its types and advantages and disadvantages. It will also provide a step by step guide for managing an email marketing campaign. Finally, good and bad practices of email marketing, which are compiled from relevant literature, will be presented.

9.1 The Definition of Email Marketing

The most distinguishing feature of the last century is the transformation of the structure of communication realised through internet networks and many different electronic devices (Kelly, 2018). This is more than just creating a network, it also demonstrates the ability of businesses and customers to transform the communication network into a global marketing platform and a marketplace where they can carry out their transactions (Marsh, 2015). Email is a form of electronic messaging that is used to send messages via computer networks. Email marketing is a form of direct marketing that uses electronic devices with the purpose of communicating a commercial message to a potential or existing customer (Kelly, 2018). Formally, email marketing is defined as ‘a structured, systematic process that is one of the most successful channels for delivering highly relevant marketing communications to targeted subscribers’ (Dodson, 2016, p.160). Inbound email marketing refers to the management of emails from customers requesting information and services whereas outbound email marketing is email campaigns to encourage customer trial and purchase (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). Electronic mail (email) marketing is considered to be one of the most effective marketing technique and communication tool.

Ray Tomlinson, a computer engineer, sent the first email in 1971. (Computinghistory.org.uk). The message he transmitted was merely numbers and characters, but it signaled the start of a new era of communication. Tomlinson also pioneered the use of the "@" sign in email addresses. This symbol actually had different meanings in different languages. While it was expressed as *"horse"* in English, it was used to mean *"dog"* in Russian. In 1978, Gary Thuerk, head of marketing at Digital Equipment Corp. used this new method of direct communication to send the first commercial email to inform people about a new product. There were only 400 addresses on his email list, but the emails he sent resulted in nearly $13 million increase in sales (Deffree, 2019). The fact that the Internet had become commercially accessible to wider social groups in the 1990s was the first big sign of the beginning of a new era. Instead of traditional communication methods, people started to correspond among themselves with this new communication method (Marsh, 2015). Of course, marketers have discovered that this new form of communication in terms of communication and advertising can be the most effective and economical way to reach the customer (HSMAI, 2018). This rapid change also makes the necessary updates on the subject very quickly. For example, the UK's Data Protection Act enforce companies to have an 'opt-out' option for all marketing emails. In 2018, the new GDPR law covering personal data processing, including emails, entered into force in Europe (CMA, 2020).

Email marketing provides goal-orientation, personalization, and individualization at low cost (Barowski, 2000). As a way of business communication, email advertising makes use of emails to deepen the connection with current and potential clients to grow their loyalty (Bourland and Handley, 2000). They are also dispatched to recruit new clients or to persuade current ones to shop for unique offerings (Kelly, 2018).

9.2 Types of Emails in the Context of Marketing

In order to send the right type of email at the right time to the right customers It is important for businesses to understand the types of emails (Deiss and Henneberry, 2017). Based on their purpose and content, e-mail messages are classified into three types: transactional, promotional, relational (Deiss and Henneberry, 2017).

9.2.1 Transactional Emails

Transactional emails are messages and automatic notifications that are sent in response to a customer action on website or application. Transactional emails are a good sign of responsiveness of a business and customer values provided. Some of the transactional emails are the following (Deiss and Henneberry, 2017):

- Order confirmations
- Confirmation of reservation
- Shipping notifications
- Invoice or purchase receipts
- Account creation
- Product return confirmations
- Support tickets
- Username-password reminders
- Coupon codes
- Verifying participation in the loyalty program
- Payment failure notification
- Confirmation of newsletter subscription
- Thank you email
- Reminder emails
- Confirmations of unsubscribe

9.2.2 Promotional Emails

Promotional emails are messages that inform and persuade your email list about your products in order to encourage purchases. Promotional emails can be about a new product, discounts, limited time offer, brand or product announcement, event announcement. Promotional emails may include:

- Catalogue emails that include products and prices of a business
- Discounts
- New products and product improvements
- New password-protected content

- Notification of a flash sale
- Updates to the loyalty program
- Notifications of upcoming events
- Offer of a trial
- Offer of an upgrade

9.2.3 Relational Emails

Relational e-mails are also called nurture emails and it aims to develop relationship with customers by providing free content and information (Deiss and Henneberry, 2017). This type of emails includes the following (Deiss and Henneberry, 2017; Khan et al., 2016):

- Subscriber welcomes
- Newsletter
- Blog articles
- Survey
- Product reviews
- Webinars
- Guides
- Contest announcement
- Press releases

Table 1 show the primary goals of each email type. As can be seen from Table 1, each mail type may serve to achieve several goals and these goals of email type may overlap.

Table 1: Email Types and Their Goals

	Primary Goal of Mail Type				
	Customer Service	Lead Generation	Retention and Loyalty	Engagement and Nurturing	Sales and Upsells
Transactional	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Relational		✓	✓	✓	✓
Promotional			✓	✓	✓

Source: Deiss and Henneberry, 2017, p.220.

9.3 Advantages and Disadvantages of Email Marketing

Email makes an important contribution in terms of content, distribution and measurement in electronic marketing studies in tourism. Permission-based and attention-grabbing content is the determinant for a successful advertising campaign. When we compare the distribution frequency of traditional mail marketing with the distribution of email, we see that we have an incomparable opportunity. For an advertising campaign to be successful, it is very important to be able to measure the activity (Todor, 2017). There are many criteria by which we can make these measurements with email marketing; open rates of messages, clicks on links and decisions that turn into purchases (conversion rate) are some of them. However, despite all these advantageous elements, the unsolicited message (spam) situation reduces the expected benefit from legal email marketing activities (Merville et al., 2006). Below are the main benefits and disadvantages of using email as a digital marketing tool.

9.3.1 Advantages of Email Marketing

Email marketing is an advantageous method as one of the first starting points of the personalized service concept inherent in tourism (Cambal, 2020). In this way, by establishing a more global marketing and sales network, it will be possible to promote businesses, provide customer interest, and provide guest satisfaction by responding in a very short and detailed time, in a way that will eliminate distance disadvantages (Sulluvan, 2022). Email marketing still holds its own place among other digital promotion methods. Although marketing is done with many newly developed methods, the target audience using active email differs from the others. Emails are the most common Internet technology among global hotel brands and the most popular Internet activity for consumers (Karlson et al., 2009). Marketing with emails sent periodically on a ground created with the consent of the consumer, is also an important marketing communication instrument for businesses that provide a closer relationship with customers and improve the image of the brand (Kelly, 2018). With the use of this instrument, it is possible for small and medium-sized businesses to offer incentives such as discounts and promotions at a cheap setup and distribution costs. (Ellis-Chadwick and Doherty, 2012). Email marketing contributes significantly to a higher

return on marketing investment than any other marketing method (Fariborzi and Zahedifard, 2012). The following are the key benefits of email marketing (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016, p.441):

- **Relatively low-cost:** Email has far lower expenses than other forms of communication.
- **Direct-response medium encourages immediate action:** Email marketing directs users to a website where the offer can be redeemed right away, increasing the likelihood of a quick, impulsive response. As a result, it is one of the most effective strategies for attracting existing clients to return to a website.
- **Faster campaign deployment:** Traditional media requires more time to develop creative and manage the entire campaign lifecycle.
- **Ease of personalisation:** Personalizing email is easier and less expensive than personalizing physical media or a website.
- **Options for testing:** Testing alternative email creative and messaging is relatively simple and inexpensive.
- **Integration:** Combining email marketing with other direct media that can be tailored, such as direct mail, mobile messaging, or site personalization, can increase campaign response because the message is reinforced by a variety of media.

9.3.2 Disadvantages of Email Marketing

The following are some of the downsides of email marketing that marketers must consider when they execute their campaigns to ensure that they adhere to best practices (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016, p.442):

- **Deliverability:** Message delivery over various internet service providers (ISPs), business firewalls, and online mail systems is difficult.
- **Renderability:** Difficulty in displaying the mail as intended in various email reading systems' inboxes.
- **Communications preferences:** Email offers, content, and frequency choices will vary among recipients, affecting engagement and reaction. Communication preferences must be used to handle this.

- **Email response decay:** It is difficult to keep customers engaged even if they subscribe to a mailing list.
- **Resource intensive:** Although email provides excellent options for targeting, personalization, and more frequent communication, it does so at the expense of extra human and technological resources.

In addition to these, Todor (2017) highlights the disadvantages of email marketing as follows:

- **The danger of undeliverable emails:** Highly sensitive emails.
- **Risk of not opening emails:** Full inboxes (inbox density).
- **Unsubscribe rates:** Customers' seasonal holiday needs do not mean that they are of interest all year.
- **Scanner problems:** Risk of some browsers turning off advertising content using ads programs.
- **Design costs:** Although email marketing is an inexpensive promotion and marketing method, it is an activity that requires a budget, requiring staff and equipment to be employed to constantly renew email content and designs.

9.4 Steps for Managing Email Marketing Campaigns

This section explores the steps for managing an email campaign which involves: 1) Building and segmenting your email list; 2) Defining email campaign objectives; 3) Designing and creating emails; 4) Optimising and delivering emails; 5) Analysing results (Dodson, 2016; Rodela, 2022)

9.4.1 Build and Segment Email List

The first stage in the process of managing an e-mail marketing campaign is collecting the emails from potential customers and defining your target market. E-mail addresses are usually collected from opt in forms that are on the website of a business or other online platforms. Potential customers should be provided valuable content or some rewards for sharing their emails. Some of the most common tools and places for collecting emails from potential customers are the following (Michail, 2018; Neher, 2019; Rodela, 2022):

- Website of a business
- Database of previous customers
- Social networks
- Email providers
- Contests
- Check-in, Check-out forms
- In-store
- Email signature
- Transactional emails confirming reservations and purchaces
- Printed marketing materials
- Templates or resources
- E-books
- Free trials or samples
- Blogs
- Landing pages from online ads, pay per click campaign
- Discounts
- Webinars
- Travel trade shows
- Networking events
- Business cards
- Giving out useful online resources such as travel guide, videos and podcasts.

Obtaining your prospects' email addresses, however, is not enough. You must understand how to segment your audience if you want to turn your email leads into paying clients. Email segmentation is the process of arranging email addresses into homogenous groups. Sorting by country, location, language, occupational group, age, education, gender, age, interest, information requested, recipient lifecycle, and buying

behaviour are some of the most prevalent segmentation concepts. Select the segmentation method that best suits your data and objectives (Rodela, 2022). Because you can adjust material to the interests of each sub-niche by segmenting emails, you can produce personalized content. As a consequence, segmented or focused emails increase click-through and open rates as well as return on investment (ROI). As a result, the better the target audience is analysed and defined, the easier to create targeted emails. Tourism and hospitality businesses may also segment their customer database based on newsletter or blog signups, special offer signups, guests who stayed bought the product before, guests who used various facilities (Michael, 2018).

9.4.2 Define Email Marketing Objectives

Start with a clear purpose in mind. Consider who you want to reach, what you want to say to them, and how you hope they respond when developing objectives (Rodela, 2022). Ask yourself the following questions to help you narrow down your objectives (Rodela, 2022):

- **Who?** Determine who you want to reach. Learn about their pain spots, goals, and emotional/psychological triggers that cause people to respond to your offerings.
- **What?** What do you want your email recipients to do with it? Do you want them to download your material, make a reservation, or attend an event? Establish a goal for each email message so that you can include a clear call to action (CTA).
- **When?** Determine which sorts of material your subscribers will find useful based on where they are in the buyer's journey. Someone in the awareness stage, for example, loves to get informative material about a product or service. Pricing guidelines, on the other hand, will be more useful to someone in the decision-making stage.
- **Where?** Determine which device your email users use to open your messages. Do they have smartphones on them? Laptops? Or possibly tablets? You may get this information from your email service provider's email analytics and use it to improve your email marketing campaign.

- **Why?** What do you want to achieve with your email marketing campaign? Is it in line with your company's overarching goals? By asking these questions, you can ensure that your email marketing campaigns and whatever other promotional endeavours you're doing to build your brand are in sync.

Broad goals of email marketing may involve selling products and services, generating leads, driving website traffic, creating brand awareness and requesting a referral (Neher, 2019). More specific and measurable email objectives may refer to a specific customer action such as number or percentage of reservations made or travel guides download as a result of sent emails or email objectives may specify a specific metric such as open rates (percentage of emails opened) or click trough rates (percentage of emails whose content has been clicked) (Michail, 2018).

9.4.3 Design and Create Emails

Your email material should be useful and relevant to your readers. Create your marketing materials based on where they are in the customer journey process to find out what content works best for them. It's also crucial to pay attention to the structure of your email's content (Rodela, 2022). You can use the AIDA model below to organize the structure of your email templates (Stokes, 2011). AIDA stands for:

- **Attention:** Grab the reader’s attention with your subject line or header.
- **Interest:** Keep readers interested by providing relevant information.
- **Desire:** Demonstrate the worth of your good or service.
- **Action:** Encourage them to take action.

Email content should be in line with the customer buying stages or customer journeys. Digital marketing funnel in Table 2 can be used to structure objectives and content of an email (Neher, 2019).

Emails can be created in text-based and HTML based formats and text based mails do not have creatives such as images and videos (Michail, 2018). Almost all email clients nowadays will handle rich text or HTML email without issue, unless the user specifies otherwise (MacDonald, 2022).You may usually select to send your marketing email in its most basic plain text format when sending it out (with no

Table 2: Digital Marketing Funnel and Email Objectives and Content

Digital Marketing Funnel	Objectives and Content
Attract/Reach	• Educate them about your business/brand • Share thought-leadership content to stay top-of-mind • Welcome them to your community, group, etc.
Nurture	• Personalize your email content for your audience • Building knowledge, like + trust • Share helpful, thought-leadership content to position your brand as an expert • Help them make a decision by providing valuable
Convert	• Have a clear call-to-action • Show clear benefit to reader - what's in it for them if they complete the action?
Retain and Grow	• Build loyalty by making them feel special/exclusive • Be useful and relevant and create content that is a good fit for existing customers
Advocate	• Encourage shares with friends • Encourage positive reviews

Source: Neher, 2019, p.202-203.

formatting). You can very much guarantee that all of your prospects will be able to read it, but it isn't the most appealing experience. Rich text format or HTML is a step up from plain text, allowing you to customize the content with font sizes, images, videos, colours, bold, and italics, as well as allowing recipients to click on web links (MacDonald, 2022). This is more visually appealing than plain text and may be quite useful for short informational newsletters. HTML is used to create the most sophisticated emails. This effectively implies that your email might appear to be a full-fledged web page, replete with photos, links, and everything else (Kelly, 2018). When an email is opened, images are normally downloaded from a website rather than being sent with it. When your prospects click through to your landing page, HTML emails may match the appearance and feel of your website, offering a consistent look and superb brand continuity (Stokes and Qirk, 2011). Although HTML is now the standard format for most email marketers, for security reasons, a lot of email clients, including web-based email clients like Hotmail and Gmail, automatically block external images until recipients override the setting for a single message or for all messages from a particular sender. As a result, it makes sense to do the following:

- Ensure that your email message works without photographs (i.e., that your value proposition and call to action are clearly conveyed in the text).
- Persuade your readers to allow images from your address in future emails.

You won't need to send various copies of your emails to distinct consumers in most cases. Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions (MIME) is an internet standard that allows communications to be sent in a 'multipart' format. This implies that the receiver's email client will display the message in the best possible way, and if the recipient has set their client to receive text-only emails, that's exactly what they'll see (Stokes and Qirk, 2011).

The email template should be brief and basic while still conveying clear information and encouraging the recipient to take action. Keep in mind that the finest marketing emails are those that provide value to the recipients (Stokes and Qirk, 2011). Many of the same usability concepts that apply to website design also apply to the creation of a successful HTML email template. Your message should appear consistently and effectively across as many platforms as feasible. People will be accessing emails on a variety of screen sizes and formats, and they will be using a variety of email applications to do it. Make sure your template functions well without visuals and is accessible and clear using the email format's lowest common denominator: plain text, and test it on as many platforms as possible to guarantee that it works (or use a service such as Litmus.com to take some of the pain out of cross-platform email testing).

Consider 'above the fold' when designing your email – much like a newspaper folded in half, the top of your email should grab the recipient's attention right away and entice them to continue reading. Don't have them wade through pages of material to find your 'once-in-a-lifetime', can't-be-missed offer. Get to the key things first, and save the less important/supporting information for the bottom of the page (CMA, 2020).

Also keep in mind that email clients frequently display a brief 'preview' of the message body in the inbox below the subject line. Use this to encourage prospects to open your letter by engaging them with the first couple of sentences. Your design should be consistent with your company's identity and branding, and it should extend to the landing page to which the email connects. A table and consistent experience

between your email and your website increases trust and, more importantly, enhances conversion (Rodela, 2022).

Rich media (flash, video, music, interactive banners, etc.) should generally be avoided in email marketing. Rich media can add a lot of value to a web page's content, but it seldom adds value to email messages, and it often has the opposite effect. While it is now feasible to include a variety of interactive information into HTML email layouts, you should consider why you are doing so. Is it truly adding value to your message and enhancing it?

Corporate firewalls and email security systems may also routinely block emails because they consider incoming emails with active material to be security risks. In other words, if people subscribe to your email lists using a work account or if business users make up your target market, they might never see your multimedia-rich email. Another thing that is typically a bad idea in email marketing is attachments. It's not a good idea to send MS Word or (worse) PDF files in marketing emails (Rodela, 2022).

9.4.4 Optimize and Deliver Emails

Email deliverability is a measure that indicates how many of your emails make it to the inboxes of your receivers. Around 21 percent of emails do not reach their recipient across the world (Deiss and Henneberry, 2017). Also, businesses have to make sure that they are not perceived as a spammer. If businesses want their email marketing initiatives to succeed, they should pay attention to this parameter. After all, if your emails don't get in the inboxes of your subscribers, they won't be opened or read. Email delivery can take the form of broadcast emails or triggered or autoresponder emails. Broadcast emails are emails that are sent manually whereas triggered emails are fully automated emails (Deiss and Henneberry, 2017, Neher, 2019).

In order to optimize your emails for deliverability, consider the following email marketing tips (Rodela, 2022):

- **Collect emails with permission:** Before sending an email sequence to a consumer, be sure you have their permission. Otherwise, they may mark you

as spam, resulting in a loss of sending reputation and email deliverability. If at all feasible, use a double opt-in.

- **Segment your audience based on their expectations:** Are your subscribers receiving the email content that they expect? Have you also taken the effort to remind them who you are and why they are receiving emails from you?
- **Keep an eye on hard bounces:** Hard bounces are emails that are permanently returned (or not sent). They may wreak havoc on your email deliverability. They have the potential to destroy your email marketing initiatives if left unchecked. It's possible that the recipient's email address is invalid, inactive, or otherwise unavailable. Use an email marketing platform that tracks delivery to control your hard bounces. Testing your emails before sending them in mass, using double opt-ins, and checking junk mail databases can all help you prevent hard bounces.

In addition, Deiss and Henneberry (2017, p.242) suggest the following principles for ensuring deliverability:

- Monitor the complaints rates and volume you receive.
- Respond to complaints immediately.
- Unsubscribe and stop sending email messages to anyone unsubscribed.
- Keep your message volume steady.
- Check your blacklist status on the major blacklist sites including Shamphaus (https://www.spamhaus.org/) and Spamcop (https://www.spamcop.net/).

Business can use a number of applications such as mail monitor (https://www.mailmonitor.com), Return Path (https://www.sendercore.org) and EmailReach (https://www.emailreach.com) to monitor email deliverability (Deiss and Henneberry, 2017).

You can grow your campaigns while streamlining your workflow by automating your emails. Your campaigns may operate without your continual attention thanks to the set-it-and-forget nature of email automation. You only need to set them up once, and they'll operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Use email automation to send welcome emails to those who join up for your newsletters, for example. Automated welcome messages allow you to onboard new subscribers without having to manually

send emails each time someone joins up – your email automation software will take care of everything.

Sending mass emails to customers in your mailing list or database via your regular emails such as outlook and Gmail or your hosting provider is not suggested due to risk of being classified as spam or blacklisted as a spammer (Michail, 2018). It is advised to use a third party email service provider that is compliant with regulatory bodies (Michail, 2018). There are many online and offline email service providers. Below are some of the good email service providers (Michail, 2018; Neher, 2019):

- MailChimp
- Constant Contact
- Aweber
- Campaign Monitor
- iContact
- Infusionsoft
- Awebwr
- Pardot
- VerticalResponse
- Lyris
- Email Marketing Software
- SendinBlue
- Drip
- Skyhour
- dotMailer

Tourism and hospitality businesses can do A/B testing during delivery of email. A/B testing refers to a user experience research method where two different versions of an email are sent to different recipients and the results are measured to compare their effectiveness. A/B split testing can be used with subsets of subscribers to determine the success of a proposed email campaign. Simply put, this is sending two (or more) copies of an email that transmit the same content in various ways (for example, by using a different subject line, colour or image) and tracking which one is more successful. You then send the most effective version of the message to your whole list based on the findings.

9.4.5 Analyse Results

Analysing key performance indicators or metrics related to email campaign objectives is the final stage of email marketing campaign management. Bounce, delivery, open, and read rates are all common email metrics. Tourism and hospitality campaign performance statistics can quantify the worth of email marketing even further. Tourism and hospitality businesses can use email marketing tools to analyse the following metrics thar are provide by most email marketing software programs (Kelly, 2018; Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016).

Email Delivery Rate: It refers to percentage of emails that enters the inbox of email recipient. Calculating email delivery rates involves dividing the total number of emails delivered (bounced mails are substracted) by the number of emails sent.

Email Open Rate: It is the percentage of email recipient who opened the email. Number of emails opened is divided by emails delivered and multiplied by 100.

The Click Through Rate (CTR): It is the percentage of people who click on a link or image within an email. It is a good indication of message attractiveness and effectiveness of content.

Email Conversion Rate: It refers to the percentage of e-mail recipients who take the required action or complete a goal in your email campaign. It is estimated by taking the number of conversions and dividing that by the number of total opened email within a specific period of time. It is a useful measure to email campaigns' effectiveness.

Revenue Per Email Sent: It is the revenue a business gets per email sent. It is measure of return on investment. It is estimated by dividing the total revenue generated from an email marketing campaign by the total number of emails sent in that campaign. In order to monitor this metric email service provider and web analytics software such as google analytics can be used.

Many email marketing tools also measure number and percentage of bounced emails, how many times the same person re-opened the same email? how many emails were forwarded to others? how many decided to unsubscribe and for what reason they did so?

9.5 Do's and Don'ts of E-Mail Marketing

This section focuses on the good practices that should be adopted and implemented and bad practices that should be avoided when using email marketing. The following section present a compilation of principles about using email as a marketing tool from the literature (Dodson, 2016; Hanlon, 2019; Michail, 2018; Neher, 2019; Rayn, 2014; Rowles, 2014).

Developing Content for Email Marketing

DO:

- Write succinct, succinct copy. Users scan emails to see whether there is anything of interest, so you must capture their attention right away. In a direct mail letter, extensive material may work, but people read email in a different way.
- Concentrate your efforts on the top of the email, which is visible when it is first opened. This is referred as 'above the fold.' They won't scroll to discover something else in the email, if you don't engage them here.
- Make an effort to stay current. This is simple wisdom, but they don't have to answer if the email contains nothing of interest. Worse yet, if the consumer gets the impression that your emails never include anything important to them, even if there is, the email is likely to be ignored.
- Send multiple versions to different segments, or use dynamic content to personalize entire sections of the email to the customer's preferences or previous purchases.
- Craft your design such that your main messages stand out even if the recipient's email software does not automatically download graphics.
- Accommodate photographs since photos give a lot of information about destinations, attractions and facilities of tourism and hospitality firms.
- Include social networking icons (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, Pinterest, TripAdvisor, etc.) in your emails.
- Display any honours, each award's emblem or logo in your emails (e.g., Small Luxury Hotels, AAA Diamond Hotel, etc.).

- Highlight the services and amenities of the business if you are targeting travellers.
- Include links to the hotel's Homepage, Special Offers, and Contact Us sections on the website. Links to the hotel's Reservations, Calendar of Events, and Visual Gallery sections should be included in leisure-focused communications.
- Segment your audience based on their preferred language and location. This allows you to target the appropriate audience with the appropriate content
- Localize your emails so that they are written in the reader's native language and are culturally relevant. Be informed of current happenings in your area, for example (e.g., Singles Day in China, religious holidays, etc.).
- Use pictures and colours that are culturally acceptable and resonate with your target audience.
- Make sure your email welcomes are written appropriately. Personalized welcomes offer a 6x greater transaction rate and 41% higher click rate than generic greetings, according to email best practices. However, keep in mind that the gender of the addressee alters the syntax of the greeting in many languages.
- Optimize your emails so that they work nicely in a smartphone email app and browser. Mobile devices are likely to be used to see them.
- Prepare a landing page that has what the customers or recipients are looking.
- Use the same tone, language, and design throughout the mail in line with previous mail.
- Create custom landing pages to convert them into buying or booking.
- Keep you formatting simple and keep your content short, simple and sweet.
- Give emphasis to your subject line. Your subject line should be short (50-70 characters).
- Consider creating a sense of urgency in your subject lines that can increase the open rate.
- Use descriptive address such as a hotel name in the from address field.

DON’T:

- Worry about your email being censored because of particular terms or content. The days of the term 'free' sending your email to the rubbish folder are long gone. What matters is your ISP's perception of you as a sender. Any

attachments, JavaScript, Flash, or video should not be included. It won't work, and many of your emails will be banned since ISPs consider this a security risk.

- Use exclamations marks, capital letters and words such as free and offer etc.
- Use generic emails such as info@ or reservations@.

Delivery of Emails

DO:

- Keep your to-do lists tidy. ISPs will evaluate whether you deserve to have your email sent based on the number of faulty addresses you send to and the number of complaints your emails generate from their customers.
- Keep your emails up to date. Simply bombarding your database with non-targeted offers will result in more complaints and have other negative consequences for your email campaign's performance.
- Employ an email service provider. Even if your budget is tight, there are companies that will handle the send from their white-listed servers for a few pounds per month, handling all the technical requirements to obtain reliable delivery rates.
- Engage your audience and keep in touch with them throughout the year.

DON'T:

- Consider whether or not employing an email service provider (ESP) will ensure appropriate inbox placement. Although an ESP can assist with the technical infrastructure required to achieve high delivery rates, only you have control over your sending reputation.
- Add whatever email addresses you can get your hands on to your list. Sending unsolicited emails or to outdated lists will result in delivery problems.

Timing and Frequency

DO:

- Send only when you have anything valuable to send. Don't get too caught up in the urge to keep a set frequency. Emails should be sent throughout the client life cycle, not only when you have a special offer. Before they forget your business, send them an email.

- Send your emails when your offer is relevant to people, when your audience is receptive and online, when they have time.

DON'T:

- Assume that sending more emails will always result in greater money. A long-term impact of sending too many emails is that your subscribers will turn off and ignore your communications, lowering your email earnings.

Testing

DO:

- Experiment with various A/B split tests to see what performs best. Ensure that each test is sent to a minimum of 1,500 people; otherwise, the findings will be suspect.
- Test the email in several email clients and webmail providers to ensure that it arrives in the inbox appearing precisely as you planned. Alternatively, you may utilize a service like Litmus.com to perform all of this for you.

DON'T:

- Test more than one thing at a time when split testing; otherwise, you won't know what caused the difference in findings. Send your email without first sending a test email to yourself. Because email systems aren't as good at processing HTML as your browser, they can mutilate text and break links.

Law and Ethics

DO:

- Make it clear on your data gathering forms what they're signing up for, what they'll get, and how often they'll get it.
- Make it simple to unsubscribe and honour such requests.
- Conform to local opt-in legislation and privacy standards and follow them. They are continually changing and vary from nation to country. Opt-in, consent, and legal notifications are all regulated differently in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria, for example.

DON'T:

Assume that simply because you're following the law, your data collection policy is ethical. In fact, spam is defined by the recipient's perception of it, not by what the law says.

Measurement and Evaluation

DO:

- Keep track of openings, clicks, and conversions. This is something that every ESP allows you to accomplish, and even Google Analytics will let you measure how many purchases may be linked to a certain email campaign. Report on overall trends rather than particular email campaigns. This allows you to see if your performance is deteriorating and forecast what will happen if the trend continues. Analyse each section of your database separately. The more you dig down the reporting data, the clearer it becomes about where your email marketing is working and where it isn't. How do new consumers do in comparison to established customers, for example? Is there a distinction between men and women? What kind of stuff does each sector enjoy? All of information will eventually lead to suggestions for how to improve underperforming parts.

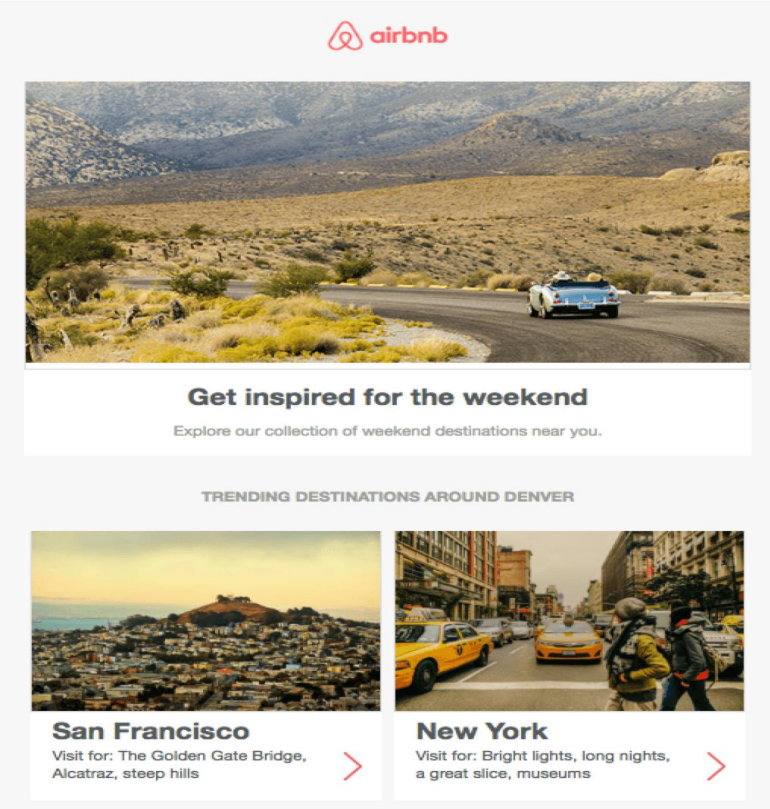
DON'T:

- Simply track the short-term results of the campaign. You must have a long-term approach.
- Be content with industry standards. Just because your competitors' typical open rates and click rates are 12% and 3%, doesn't mean you should accept them. Those companies who put in the time and effort to make their email marketing campaign relevant and timely outperform the competition by at least 50%.

9.6 Sample Email Marketing Campaigns

Airbnb is an online marketplace for holiday rentals and short-term housing. Airbnb operates as a broker during the transaction and charges a fee for this service. They advertise themselves as "A Community Built on Trust," and they have a solid

Figure 1: Airbnb Email Marketing Campaign of Destinations


airbnb
Get inspired for the weekend
Explore our collection of weekend destinations near you.
TRENDING DESTINATIONS AROUND DENVER
San Francisco
Visit for: The Golden Gate Bridge, Alcatraz, steep hills
New York
Visit for: Bright lights, long nights, a great slice, museums

Source: Airbnb.com

Figure 2: Email Marketing for a Mexican Restaurant

FROM
$8
Delicious
MEXICAN FOOD
Experience The Taste
Mexican Restaurant - Taste You'll Never Forget
Taco
This Mexican appetizer is a hit at any party. You can substitute warm broth for the warm water if desired. Serve with a variety of toppings such as beans, cheese, and meat with frozen strawberries.
Mexican Dishes Are Yummy Enough To Make You Feel Phenomenal
Potato Burrito
Fish Tacos
Flank Steak
Book Your Table Now
Facebook
Twitter
LinkedIn
Google
Instagram
Website
Email Marketing For Mexican Restaurant

Source: https://www.formget.com/best-restaurant-email-marketing/

reputation to back up that claim. The following promotional email from Airbnb is a wonderful email example that is customised for different market segments (Figure 1). After that, you can include links to your official website and social media profiles in your email marketing campaigns so that your recipients may pick their preferred method of contact. Take a look at a sample of restaurant email marketing that used website and social network buttons in their email footer (Figure 2).

9.7 Conclusion

Email marketing should be a significant part of marketing programs of hospitality and tourism businesses because of advantages it does provide. In this module, first you were provided with the definition email marketing and types of email in the context of marketing. Then, potential benefits and the drawbacks of email marketing to businesses in general and for tourism and hospitality business were discussed. A step by step guide for managing an email marketing campaign was introduced and each step is explained in detail. Finally, main principles of email marketing, which are compiled from relevant literature, was presented. Small and medium-sized tourism enterprises may easily and effectively implement these principles in their businesses.

Supplementary Sources

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https://www.sendinblue.com/

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Assessment Questions

1) Which of the following concepts is used to describe a structured, systematic process that is one of the most effective direct channels for delivering highly relevant marketing communications to targeted subscribe?

a) Outbound email marketing **b) Email marketing** c) Inbound marketing

d) Automated marketing

2) Which of the following is NOT an email type in the context of marketing?

a) Transactional emails b) Promotional Emails c) Relational emails **d) Social emails**

3) Which of the following is not an advantage of email marketing?

a) Personalisation of messages b) Measurability of email campaigns **c) Difficulty of email delivery** d) Relatively low cost

4) Which of the following is an email service provider or email marketing tool?

a) Google analytics **b) MailChimp** c) Google ads d) Social media

5) Which of the following website can be used to monitor e-mail deliverability?

a) https://www.spamhaus.org b) https://www.spamcop.net

c) https://www.emailreach.com d) https://www.wordtracker.com

6) The Click Through Rate (CTR) is the percentage of people who click on a link or image within an email.

a) True b) False

7) Exclamation marks, capital letters and words such as free and offer should be used in the email subject line.

a) True **b) False**

8) Social networking icons should NOT be included in emails sent to subscribers.

a) True **b) False**

9) What is the correct of order of steps for managing email marketing campaigns?

a) Analysing results

b) Defining email campaign objectives

c) Optimising and delivering emails

d) Designing and creating emails

e) Building and segmenting an email list

a) ebdca b) acdbe c) bdcae d) cdbea

10) Please match the concepts with the correct definition?

1-Renderability of an email	a-They are email messages and automatic notifications that are sent in response to a customer action.
2-Email conversion rate	b-It refers to email campaigns to encourage customer trial and purchase.
3-Transactional emails	c-It refers to the percentage of e-mail recipients who take the required action or complete a goal in your email campaign.
4- Outbound email marketing	d) It is the difficulty in displaying emails for the variety of web clients, email clients, and devices.

a)1b, 2a, 3c, 4d **b) 1d, 2c, 3a, 4b** c)1d, 2a, 3b, 4d d) 1c, 2d, 3a, 4b

Module 10: Web Analytics and Digital Channel Performance Management for Small and Medium Sized Tourism Enterprises

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Learning Objectives

This module will inform the trainees on how to measure the performance of their online presence of businesses, including websites, e-mails and social media channels. In this module, web analytic systems, their advantages and disadvantages, relevant tools and data resources will be presented.

After reading this module, the reader will be able to:

- know what online web analytics and digital channel performance management mean;
- explain metrics used in web analytics and digital channel performance management;
- distinguish on-site and off-site web analytics and performance management tools;
- know the benefits and disadvantages of using web analytics;
- identify data sources and analytics tools for websites, social media, digital advertising and e-mail;
- upload and use google analytics for a website;
- use various social media analytics and report metrics for social media ad campaign or a post;
- adjust the social media activities and contents according to the analytics results;
- adjust the website services and contents according to the analytics results.

10.0 Introduction

The tourism and hospitality industry gained new platforms to reach global clients with the development of digital channels. However, it contains new rules and orders in itself. Everything is online and a client's satisfaction cannot be measured with only a smiling face. This module introduces basic measurements of efficiency of online platforms. In the chapter, web analytics and beneficial tools, social media analytic tools and data analysis through these tools are explained in detail. The analysing process and building an online strategy based on the gathered data are detailed step by step.

10.1 Definition of Web Analytics and Digital Channel Performance

Analysing website visitor behaviour is done using web analytics (Chaffe, & Patron, 2012). Web analytics, also known as digital analytics, is 'the measurement, collection, analysis, and reporting of web data to understand and optimize web usage' (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2019, p.462 quoting Web Analytics Association, 2008). By using web analytics, a tourism-related business can better understand how customers behave when making purchases online, draw in more customers by learning where they are coming from, keep existing customers coming back for more products or services, measure the ROI (Return On Investment) of online (and offline to online) marketing campaigns, and even increase the average amount each customer spends. The effectiveness of digital channels is evaluated using web analytics or digital analytics. Performance management is 'the process of evaluating the efficacy and efficiency of prior acts through the collection, coordination, organization, sorting, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination of pertinent data' (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2019, p.464; Nelly et al., 2002).

Companies need to identify their clients' needs, online buying behaviour and foresee as well as understand trends in the industry. This will have an impact on the provision of their own services more efficiently and can support the implementation of innovation. Web analytics tools and performance management for digital channels help companies to measure performance of their websites, global trends and client's buying behaviour. Statistical data and graphics can help them plan their marketing strategy. Web analytics can be on-site or off-site.

Off-site Web Analytics

Off-site web analytics is the practice of measuring, gathering and analysing internet data outside of an organization's website. Through off-site web analytics, tourism and hospitality businesses can gather and analyse data relating to their potential customers' online buying behaviour, their visibility, competitive standing, customer comments and complaints. It helps businesses to analyse macro level or industry data and to see the big picture on the online market. Companies can see the market trends and their potential with these analytics. Tourism and hospitality firms can observe the tourism trends, activities, places and services in the sector and they can improve their business operations accordingly. Off-site analytics gather and examine information gathered from many online sources, including social media, search engines, forums, and review websites.

On-site Web Analytics

On-site web analytics measure a visitor's online behaviour once on a website. The on-site web analytic tools help to see how effective a business website is. These tools provide data of visitor traffic to a website and they are capable to tracking the interest and interaction on your website. Tourism and hospitality businesses can monitor how long customers stayed on a website, what they did on a website, which services have been demanded more and if booking funnel works as appropriately.

10.2 Key Terms Used in Web Analytics and Digital Channel Performance

There are a number of terms that are regularly used in web analytics and digital channel performance. The most used terms are explained below and most of them are adapted from Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_analytics).

- **Bounce Rate:** Bounce rate is the percentage of visitors who only view one page on a website before leaving it again without viewing any other pages or engaging with it in any other way. In reports, this is frequently portrayed negatively. However, having a high bounce rate does not necessarily indicate that your landing page or website is subpar. It frequently depends on the page's content, which may be

adequate for the visitor. It's advised to use restraint when a bounce rate is high. It is best to carefully investigate the true cause of this behaviour.

- **Click Path:** The click path details chronological sequence of the page views by a user during her/his website visit. For example, a visitor has found your page via a search engine, lands on page A, goes further to page B, C, … up until the exit page. This list of pages represents the click path.
- **Hit:** A request for a specific file that is fulfilled by the web server is represented by a hit. Analysing the website logs reveals this. In reality, it is not very helpful if you want to analyse website traffic. Therefore, it should not be employed to demonstrate the popularity of a website. This is why: Several (sometimes dozens) separate files make up a single web page, and each of these files counts as a hit as the page is downloaded. A page with several of these individual files will receive many hits; a page with few of these discrete files will receive much fewer hits. In other words, hits do not reflect a page's popularity but rather its intricacy. If you notice an increase in hits, this can point to a caching issue rather than increased popularity. A technology to quicken your website and reduce the number of hits on your webserver is caching. Keeping your server from being overburdened with traffic and data requests is its primary goal. A more true and accurate evaluation of popularity is provided by the overall number of visits or page views.
- **Page View:** Literally, a page view is an impression of a page that has been viewed. It is an instruction to open a single webpage (images, .js and .css files, etc.). Utilizing web caching usually helps to moderate this.
- **(Unique) Visitor / User (UV):** This is the client who is markedly different (visitor of your website). During a specific time frame, this customer is producing page views and hits (this could be a few hours, a day, a week, a month, a year). Regarding the duration of a UV, the total UVs for a website over the course of a month are not merely the sum of the UVs for each day. A cookie is stored on the browser you are using and is used to identify a UV. An older method used to collect this data is the specific combination of the computer's IP address and the User-Agent (browser) information. It's a good idea to be aware of the possibility of bots tainting your statistics before assuming that all UVs are legitimate visitors.
- **Visit / Session:** The number of page requests made by a single UV are considered a visit or session. It is typically regarded as finished when no requests are recorded

for a predetermined period of time, typically 30 minutes. Some of the technologies we'll discuss allow you to customize this period (in particular for Google Analytics). It's best practice to avoid keeping these times too brief because website users may move tabs and visit other websites, for example.

- **Active / Engagement Time:** On average, a UV spends the following amount of time interacting with website content: scrolling, hovering, and mouse movement. This metric precisely measures the duration of engagement, in contrast to session duration and page view duration / time on page. However, most tools don't always have it available right away.
- **Average Page Depth / Views Per Average Session:** This is the "size" of an average visit (approximately). To obtain this, we should divide the total number of page views by the total number of website visits.
- **Average Page View Duration:** This is the time spent on a website page. This can be misleading as this is based on the visits over the course of for instance 30 minutes while there is no correct info if a user has in the meantime also visited another website.
- **Click:** This is a single instance of a user who is selecting a hyperlink on a page.
- **Event:** This is a single action or a sequence of actions that take place during a website visit.
- **Exit Rate / % Exit:** The page from which the UV leaves the website is relevant to this. This doesn't mean that a particular page is awful; it could just be the last page of the booking form, for example. However, it could mean that a specific page is having issues (loading slowly, unclear information, etc.). It is advised to look at ways to lower the exit percentage on that page if a page that is generated throughout the booking process is leading to a lot of exits before a booking has been made. Perhaps you should add a hint to your copyright or make the booking possibilities more obvious. In the case that something happens, it is a good idea to analyse it.
- **First Visit / First Session / Absolute Unique Visitor:** This details a uniquely identified client. This is rather theoretical because this requires the usage of a persistent cookie/digital fingerprinting. However, these may have been removed, so this is not a very reliable indicator.

- **Frequency / Session Per Unique:** This indicator details the visits a website receives during a specific time period. We obtain this dividing the visits with the number of unique visitors, and this during a specific period of time.
- **Impression:** It is frequently employed to count the number of times an advertisement was really shown on a website. If a website visitor actually noticed this and took action by clicking on the link or banner of the advertisement is not specified. Because you never know what will be displayed above the fold, CPM (cost per thousand views) is not always a valid or decent method of running adverts (and we haven't even taken the impact of bots into account here). Because of this, many businesses will only track and compensate for legitimate clicks while running adverts.
- **New Visitor:** This refers to a visitor who has never accessed your website before. Just like with a UV, this is difficult to actually be proven.
- **Page Time Viewed / Page Visibility Time / Page View Duration:** This reflects how long a visitor have accessed your page.
- **Repeat Visitor:** This indicator refers to a recurrent website visitor.
- **Return Visitor:** A UV whose activity includes visiting a website within a reporting period but who had already visited the website before the reporting period. The person is only counted once throughout the reporting period.
- **Session Duration / Visit Duration:** Average time spent by visitors on the site each time they go there It is computed by dividing the total number of sessions by the sum of all of the sessions.
- **Single Page Visit / Singleton:** A visit during which only one page is accessed. This might be a landing page for a campaign, for example. A landing page like this is a separate web page made especially for a marketing or advertising campaign.
- **Site Overlay:** it is a content box that appears on top of a page and obscures the background content**.** The site overlay typically shows click and conversion data superimposed over the links on a Web page.
- **Click-through Rate:** This is a comparison between the proportion of people that click on a particular link and the total users who view a page, email, or advertisement. It is frequently used to assess the success of an email marketing campaign and an online advertising campaign.

- **Pay Per Click-PPC:** A publisher is paid by an advertiser when the ad is clicked in this internet advertising technique, which is used to increase website traffic.
- **Pay Per Acquisition / Pay Per Conversion-PPA:** A campaign's or channel's overall cost to acquire one paying customer is measured by this marketing metric.
- **Pay Per Lead-PPL:** It is a performance-based digital advertising in which the affiliate or publisher is compensated for each lead generated that satisfies the requirements outlined in the advertiser's affiliate agreement.
- **Cost Per Conversion:** It is the ratio of the number of successful conversions (purchases, signups, participation, or whatever the advertisement's purpose is) to the total cost of advertisements. Total cost of your ad campaign is dived by the number of achieved conversions (customers) within that same timeframe.
- **Customer Acquisition Cost:** The cost of converting a potential lead into an actual customer.

10.3 Benefits and Downside of Web Analytics

Web analytics offer many advantages for digital marketing activities of tourism and hospitality businesses. These benefits include the following (https://engaiodigital.com/what-is-web-analytics/).

Measuring Traffic to a Website: It is possible to identify number of users or visitors, their location, devices used, pages viewed, time spent on the website, interaction with the website and conversion rates.

Spotting Bounce Rates: Bounce rates show the number of visitors who do not interact with the webpage after seeing the landing page. Bounce rate may be a good indicator of the ineffectiveness of landing pages of a website.

Targeting the Right Market Segments and Measuring Marketing Effectiveness: Web analytics allow businesses to choose the location and demographics of customers so that they can align their marketing communication campaigns with the right location and customers. Beyond that, businesses can also measure the results

and performance of their marketing communication and campaigns on the internet in relation to their digital marketing objectives and metrics.

Improving and Optimising Website, Web Services and Conversion: All the information collected through web analytics can be used to improve the website design, marketing communication and campaign and increase conversion rates.

There are few disadvantages that may arise due to the use of web analytics. One of the disadvantages of using web analytics may be the cost of using such software and employing qualified personnel although many companies including Google offer analytics solutions free of charge. Another drawback of using the web analytics is related to the confidinciality of business data. It means that valuable information regarding your company, customers and your business performance no longer remain confidential to you (https://www.canddi.com/blog/2015/01/pros-cons-web-analytics/)

10.4 Web Analytics Data Sources

Web analytics data sources provide information to analyse the performance of your website. Provided information is being analysed to measure the customers web trafficking patterns. Generally, this information comes from the customers inputs on the online software systems (such as HTTP headlines, IP addresses, etc.).

10.4.1 Web Server Log File Analysis

When a user clicks on a link to a web page or enters its URL (Uniform Resource Locator), the page is requested from the server by the user's ISP (Internet Service Provider). Then, the ISP shares the user's information with the server and the server saves this information in what are referred to as server logs or web logs. Log files includes list of transactions that are recorded by web servers. A server log is a normal text file that records the user's activity on the server. You can see the activity details of the website, and visitor's information such as IP addresses, type of browsers, country of origin, etc. Also, with these data pattern traffic can be detailed by day, week or referrer.

10.4.2 Page Tagging

Page tagging is a big improvement over server logs. Page tags are code snippets of a webpage/website. Web page tagging can be named as web bugs and these data can be used as the secondary data collection method. These codes are mostly created in JavaScript. Cookies on webpages are a good example of page tagging.

10.4.3 Geolocation of Visitors

Geolocation information is used to define the language and currency as per the visitor's country, region or the city. IP addresses are used to map visitors' location. This information helps to analyse diverse demands based on the geographical factors. It helps businesses to predict customer behaviour and regional tendencies via online platforms. It also helps to offer site visitors a better website experience by giving them info which is related to their geographical location. This can come in various ways: adapted language, refer to company website in their own country, change prices into local currency.

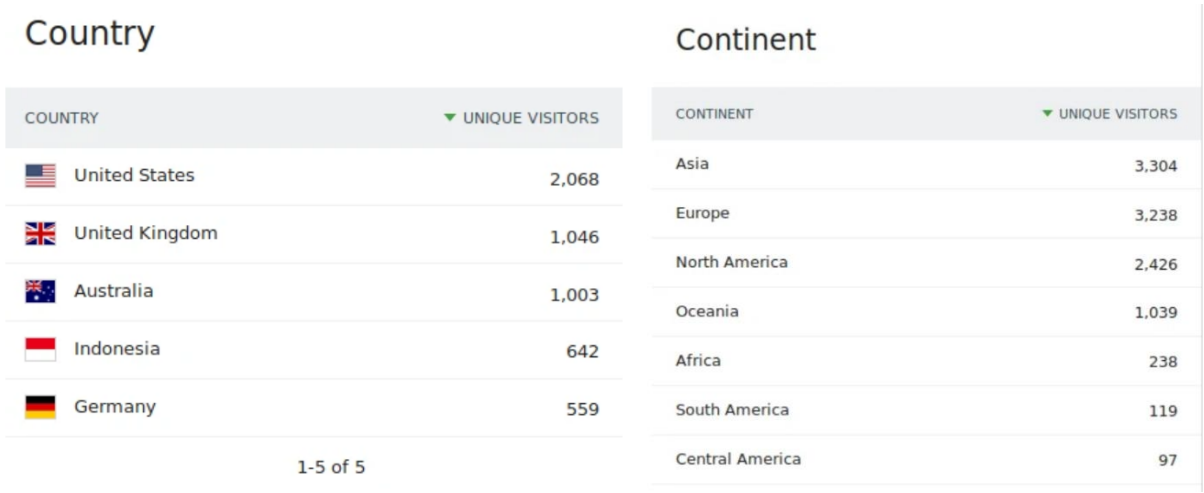


Figure 1: Matomo, Geo Locate Your Visitors, March 2020, https://matomo.org/docs/geo-locate/

Figure 2: Matomo, Geo Locate Your Visitors, March 2020, https://matomo.org/docs/geo-locate/

10.4.4 Click Analytics

The main focus of click analytics is on what and where website visitors are clicking on a web page. This aids analysts in researching the web page's most often clicked or avoided places as well as user behaviour there. It is useful to gauge both the popularity of a website and its effectiveness.

10.4.5 Customer Lifecycle Analytics

The customer lifecycle analysis is mainly helping businesses to identify the demand and interaction of a website. This approach provides various data to predict behavioural patterns of the customers regarding your goods and services. Businesses gather these data to measure the demand for their product and plan for further steps. In addition to that this method gives businesses a chance to get to know more about their customers. Customers can be categorized into different lifecycle stages, including acquisition, activation, revenue, retention and referral, based on their online journey.

10.5 Process of Managing Digital Analytics and Digital Marketing Performance

In order to measure the effectiveness of their website, online digital marketing channels and performance, tourism and hospitality businesses should have a plan to

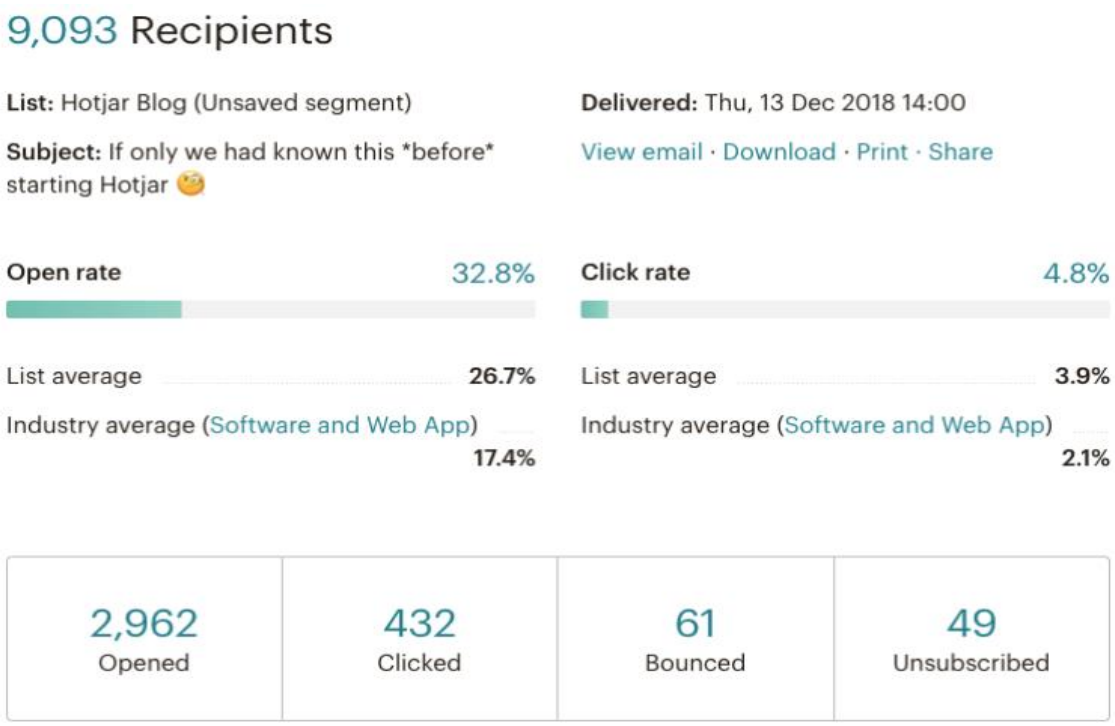

9,093 Recipients
List: Hotjar Blog (Unsaved segment)
Delivered: Thu, 13 Dec 2018 14:00
Subject: If only we had known this *before* starting Hotjar
View email · Download · Print · Share
Open rate 32.8%
Click rate 4.8%
List average 26.7%
Industry average (Software and Web App) 17.4%
List average 3.9%
Industry average (Software and Web App) 2.1%
2,962 Opened
432 Clicked
61 Bounced
49 Unsubscribed

Figure 3: Hotjar, Click tracking 101: what you need to know to start tracking clicks on your website, March 2020, https://www.hotjar.com/blog/click-tracking/

manage web analytics, digital channel performance and digital marketing campaigns. Managing website analytics and digital channel performance usually involves five steps including determining business needs and digital marketing objectives, identifying metrics to measure and improve digital marketing performance, using appropriate tools and analytics software to collect and analyse data, reviewing and interpreting performance metrics or measures, and evaluation and monitoring (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Each step is briefly reviewed below.

10.5.1 Determining Business Needs and Digital Marketing Objectives

The first step in the web or digital analytics process is to identify the business and digital marketing objectives that a business tries to achieve through online marketing activities. As discussed in module one, marketing objectives and performance indicators should be specific, measurable, assignable, realistic and time-based (SMART). These business objectives are usually known as Metrics as well as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) or Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) which are reviewed below.

10.5.2 Identifying Metrics to Measure and Improve Website and Digital Channel Performance

Digital marketing metrics are quantitative values used to measure and track the performance of websites, digital channels and digital marketing campaigns. These metrics may be related to number of visitors to a website, conversion rates of customers who visit a website (percentage of website visitors who turn into actual customers), number of likes of a social media post, number of viewers of an e-mail etc.

Table 1: Metrics Used in Web Analytics and Digital Channel Performance

Metric Type	**Digital Performance Metrics**
Financial	Sales, Return on Investment, Conversion rate, Cost per action, Cost per lead, Cost per customer, Customer lifetime value
Customer Volume	Number of views (posts, videos, ads, Fans, likes, followers)
Customer Behaviour	Volume / Value of repeated sales, willingness to recommend
Customer Satisfaction	Net Promoter Score/Customer Satisfaction Score, Sharing, Re-tweets, Favourites, Feedback to your business, comments on the site, Ratings/Reviews, Advocates positively promoting your business
Product Quality	Number of returns, Order / reservation cancellations, review scores,
Market Share	Number of visitors to owned media
Market Growth Rate	The percentage of online and offline market declining or growing
Awareness	Share of voice (electronic word of mouth), Brand sentiment,
Engagement	E-mail subscriptions, Group membership, Downloads, Love/likes,
Distribution / Availability	Online availability

Source: Hanlon, 2019, p. 312.

Table 1 gives some of the digital metrics that can be used in web analytics and digital channel performance measurement whereas Table 2 combines marketing objectives with metrics and tools that can be used for the measurement purpose. In term of the effects on business performance not all the metrics are considered as the same.

Table 2: Online Marketing Objectives, Metrics and Tools

Objectives	Metrics	Tool
Brand awareness	Traffic generated to content via referral, direct, paid and organic channels, traffic generated to website, click-through rate from content to rest of website, content views, time spent on content site/content	Google Analytics, using URL builder
Lead generation	Subscriptions and downloads	Google Analytics, using URL builder
Sales and Return on Investment	Sales and Return on Investment	Google Analytics, using URL builder
Retention	Number of returning visitors	Google Analytics
Social engagement	Content views, shares, interactions, comments, followers (Followerwonk), time spent on content, in-page analytics, bounce rate	Twitter Analytics LinkedIn Analytics YouTube Analytics Google+ Platform Insights Meta Business Suite (Previously Facebook Analytics) Simply Measured (for Instagram) Mailchimp reports AdWords (for PPC)
Link building	Number of high-quality inbound links generated to content and website	Open Site Explorer, SEMrush, Linkdex

Source: Iredale, Heinze, Williams, 2020, p.250.

Table 3: Weak, Acceptable and Strong Metrics

Weak Metrics (Awareness)	Acceptable Metrics (Consideration)	Strong Metrics (Conversions)
• Views (posts, video, ads) • Fans, likes, followers • Favourites • Feedback to your business • Comments on the site	• Number of visitors to owned media • E-mail subscription • Group membership • Downloads • Ratings/Reviews • Love/like this • Brand sentiment	• Advocates positively promoting your business • Return on investment • Conversion rate • Cost per action • Cost per customer • Conversion action (sale, data swap, applicants) • Repated sales (retained, returning customers)

Source: Hanlon, 2019, p.315.

Hanlon (2019) distinguishes between weak, acceptable and strong metrics which are given in Table 3.

10.5.3 Using Appropriate Tools and Analytics Software to Collect and Analyse Data

Web analytic tools are designed to make the website analysis and channel performance easier. There are various such tools. Tourism and hospitality businesses can choose among them based on their needs and specialities. In this module, more space is devoted to Google Analytics since it is one of the most used web analytics tool and small and medium sized tourism enterprises can take advantage of it freely.

10.5.3.1 Google Analytics

Google analytics is by far one of the most popular web analytics softwares. It is provided by Google to analyse the visitor trafficking of a website, also in real time. It is free, has an easy usage with an automatic data collection option, it supplies a customization report, as well as easy integration with different devices (tablet, pc, smartphone) and platforms (other Google services, CMS, etc.).

When people are logged into their Gmail when visiting your website, it will also provide detailed information about your visitors based on their age and gender (which basically is also a source of privacy concerns). It furthermore gives you information on the device, location, OS used on PC or smartphone, etc. There's a Google Analytics Academy[1], where you can get in-depth information on the platform. Also you can connect your Google Analytics account with your Google Ads account in order to measure your efforts, whether it's a lead or a sale. In that case you need to add a tag (which you define) at the final page of the lead or the sale (for instance at the "thank you for ordering" page). It can be complicated for non-professional users (beginners) and the learning curve never stops as Google continuously changes and adds new features. Some of the needed features are often hidden away and need various manipulations to discover. Furthermore, Google Analytics has been found to have several errors such as; poorly placed/no page tags, JavaScript error, inaccurate in-page analytics and multiple tracking codes on one page. There are a number of advantages of using google analytics for businesses. It is free except for the premium version. It is easy to use and it can be combined with other Google products and services. On the negative side, Google Analytics raises some privacy concerns, especially regarding the private data information it collects and provides to the companies using it.

Since Google Analytics is the main platform that small and medium sized tourism and hospitality businesses are likely to use, below is given a more in-depth analysis of the tool. The main functions of Google Analytics are data collection, data processing and report generation regarding a website.

Data Collection

It includes:

- Number of visitors to your website.
- Number of new visitors to your website.
- Origin (geographically) of the visitors.
- Devices used by the visitors to visit your website.

[1] https://analytics.google.com/analytics/academy/

- The way those visitors navigate your website.
- User behaviour on your website.
- How users engage with various website elements.
- The length of time visitors stay on your website.
- When users depart your website during a visit.

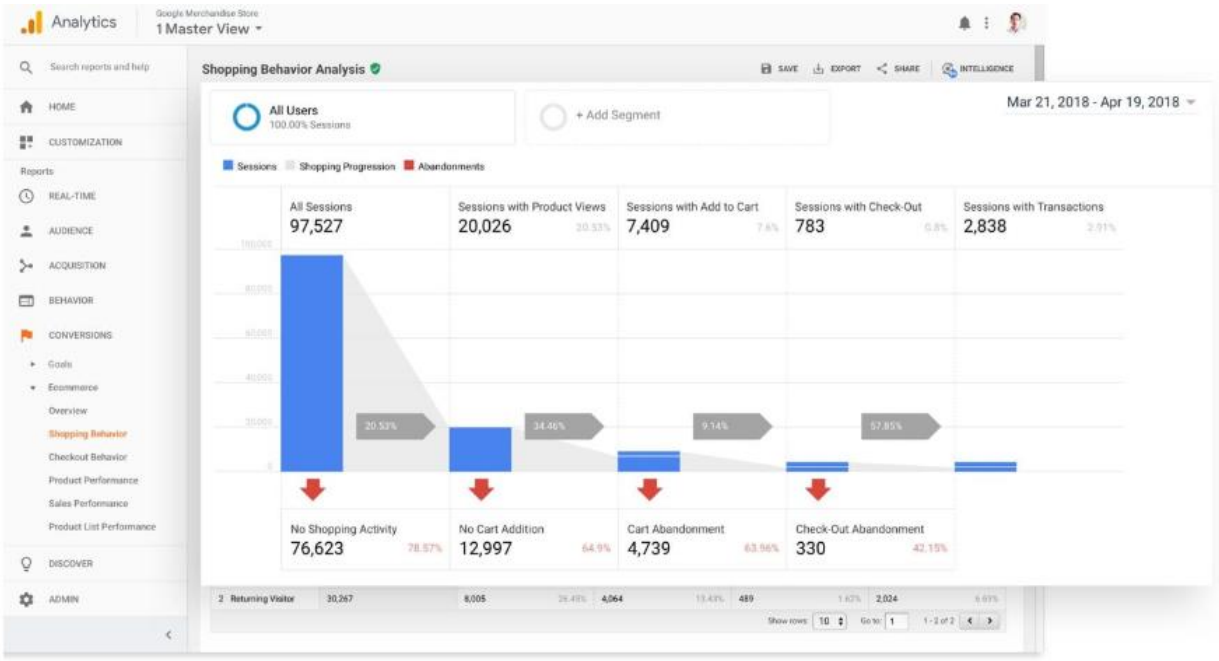


Figure 4: Google Analytics, March 2020, https://marketingplatform.google.com/about/analytics/

To collect all of this information, Google Analytics uses JavaScript code. You will get that code once you set up your website Analytics. The code must be added to every page of your website (you can do this easily via your CMS in one go without having to do it manually on every website page). The code itself then creates a cookie in each visitor's browser. Following that, a hit from the cookie reports every interaction a user makes with your website to Google Analytics. There are three categories of hits that Google Analytics accepts:

- **Pageview Hit:** Every time someone goes to your website, it gets sent. It includes details on the browser and device that users are using. It also displays which pages of a website were visited.
- **Event Hit:** It is transmitted whenever a visitor takes an action on your website, like filling out a form, clicking on a link, or watching a video.

- **Transaction/Ecommerce Hit**: In our example, it is sent whenever a website visitor makes a reservation. These hits may contain details such as which pages the visitor left before placing a reservation. Additionally, it contains the particular goods they bought and their total spending.

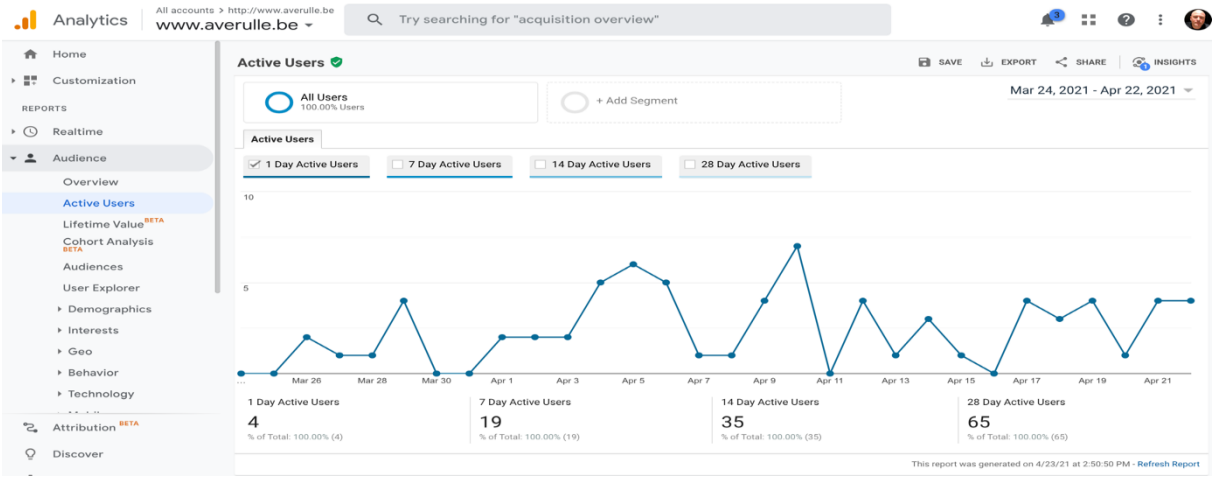
Data Processing

Google Analytics produces reports after processing the data. Separating data by users and sessions is the initial step in the processing of data.

- **User Data:** This information relates to various, unique site visitors. Each each visitor to your website receives a special, arbitrary user ID generated by Google Analytics. The user ID is recognized by Analytics when a user returns to your website in the future (a returning visitor), unless the user has deleted all of the cookies from their browser cache or when they use a different device, in which case they will be counted as a new visitor.
- **Session Data:** A user's visit to your website is known as a session. When a user first accesses the website, it starts with a pageview hit and continues until they eventually leave. Google Analytics gathers a variety of session data types throughout each session, including:
    - The pages visited.
    - The actions performed.
    - The amount of time spent on your website.

Report Generation

These are illustrations of the information gathered by Google Analytics. For example, the following report displays the volume of visitors a website receives over time:



A combination of Dimensions and Metrics is shown in every report generated by Google Analytics.

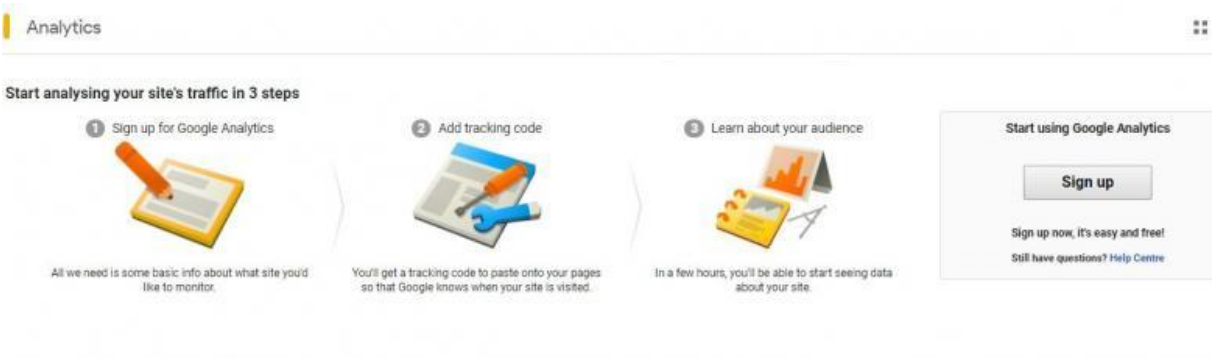
- Dimensions: The fundamental characteristics of the data that was gathered, like, say, "country."
- Metrics: These are numerical evaluations, such as the "Sessions" meter, which informs you of the volume of visits to your website over time.

Of course, it's also possible to build unique reports that mix several metrics and characteristics.

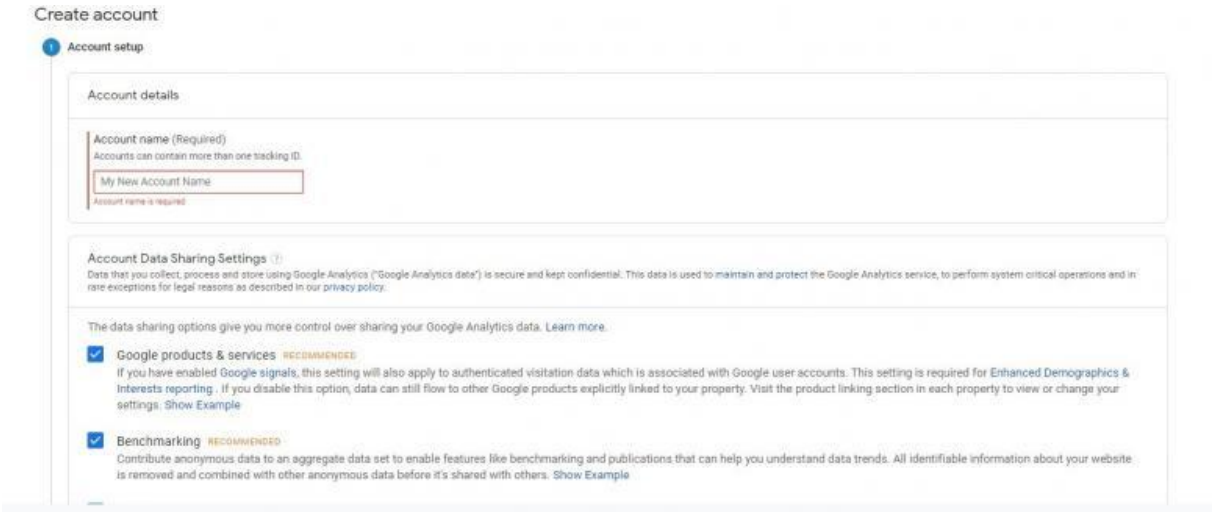
Not all dimensions and metrics can be merged into reports, so keep that in mind. Each of them has a "scope," which refers to the depth to which data is gathered. User-level, session-level, and hit-level are the various scopes. Metrics and dimensions from the same scope can only be combined once.

Setting Up Google Analytics

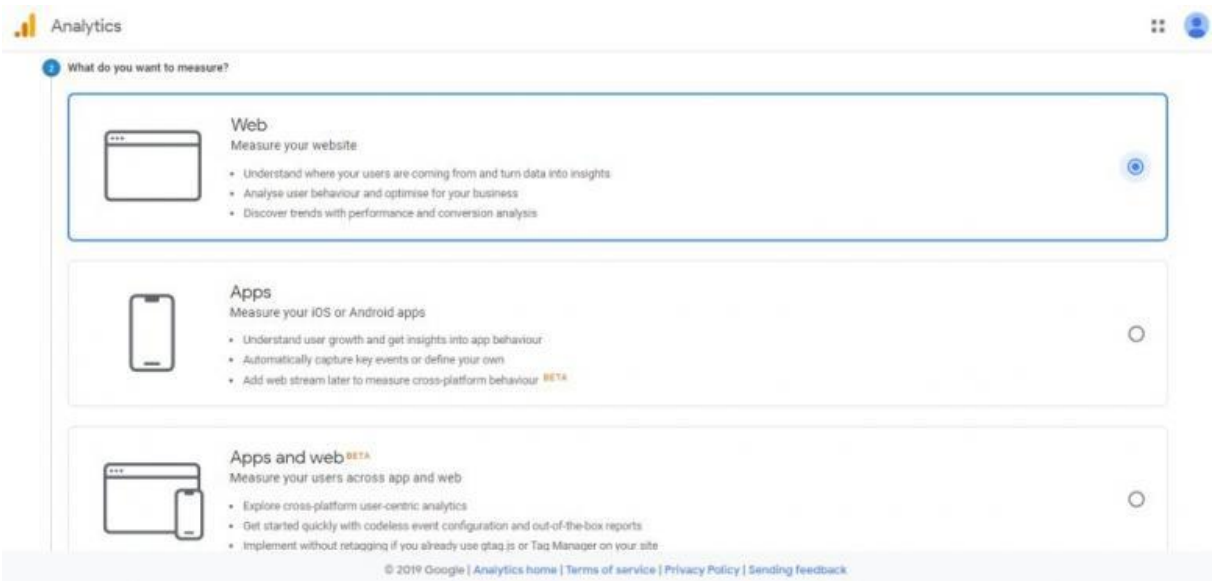
If you don't already have one, you should first create a Google Account. You already have one if you use Google Drive, Gmail, or other services. If not, just create one by going to https://accounts.google.com/signin . When you have got an account or signed up for one, log in and go to Google Analytics at https://analytics.google.com .


Analytics
Start analysing your site's traffic in 3 steps
1 Sign up for Google Analytics
All we need is some basic info about what site you'd like to monitor.
2 Add tracking code
You'll get a tracking code to paste onto your pages so that Google knows when your site is visited.
3 Learn about your audience
In a few hours, you'll be able to start seeing data about your site.
Start using Google Analytics
Sign up
Sign up now, it's easy and free!
Still have questions? Help Centre

The platform can be set up in three steps, which are really easy to follow. To sign up, click the signup button when you're ready. There you provide information about yourself and what you will be using Google Analytics for.


Create account
1 Account setup
Account details
Account name (Required)
Accounts can contain more than one tracking ID.
My New Account Name
Account Data Sharing Settings
Data that you collect, process and store using Google Analytics ("Google Analytics data") is secure and kept confidential. This data is used to maintain and protect the Google Analytics service, to perform system critical operations and in rare exceptions for legal reasons as described in our privacy policy.
The data sharing options give you more control over sharing your Google Analytics data. Learn more.
Google products & services RECOMMENDED
If you have enabled Google signals, this setting will also apply to authenticated visitation data which is associated with Google user accounts. This setting is required for Enhanced Demographics & Interests reporting. If you disable this option, data can still flow to other Google products explicitly linked to your property. Visit the product linking section in each property to view or change your settings. Show Example
Benchmarking RECOMMENDED
Contribute anonymous data to an aggregate data set to enable features like benchmarking and publications that can help you understand data trends. All identifiable information about your website is removed and combined with other anonymous data before it's shared with others. Show Example

You decide what you want to measure after choosing an account name and a few other settings.


Analytics
What do you want to measure?
Web
Measure your website
Understand where your users are coming from and turn data into insights
Analyse user behaviour and optimise for your business
Discover trends with performance and conversion analysis
Apps
Measure your iOS or Android apps
Understand user growth and get insights into app behaviour
Automatically capture key events or define your own
Add web stream later to measure cross-platform behaviour BETA
Apps and web BETA
Measure your users across app and web
Explore cross-platform user-centric analytics
Get started quickly with codeless event configuration and out-of-the-box reports
Implement without retagging if you already use gtag.js or Tag Manager on your site
© 2019 Google | Analytics home | Terms of service | Privacy Policy | Sending feedback

Entering the precise information for the website you need to track is the last step in the account registration procedure. Enter the URL you want to link to your Analytics account after creating your account.

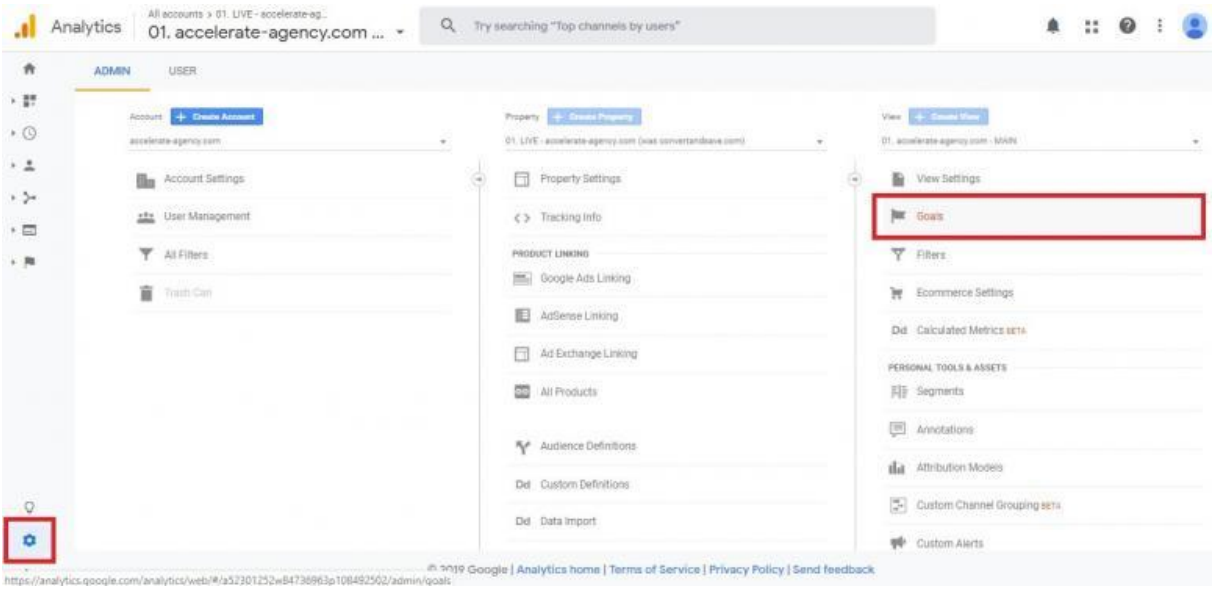
Your Google Analytics account will then be activated after you click the create button. Additionally, it will provide you your tracking code for the website you selected to track. The tracking code is what enables Google Analytics to gather information from website visitors. The code needs to be added to your website as the following step.

Adding Your Tracking Code

Every page of your website needs to have your tracking code added. By including the code in the website's header or footer, you may achieve this quickly and easily in your CMS. The tracking code must be included immediately behind the "head" tag in your header file. You may add a plugin to WordPress that will allow you to add Google Analytics to your CMS. Simply type "Google Analytics" on the WordPress plugins page to find the one you want, then download and install it. Analytics will immediately start monitoring the data from your website. We'll now establish one or more objectives.

Setting Up Goals and Objectives

With your website, you want to persuade visitors to purchase a good (such as a reservation, beverages, etc.). Whatever the objectives of your website are, Google Analytics Goals will give you a tool to evaluate how effectively it achieves those objectives. Now, let's talk about how to set this up.

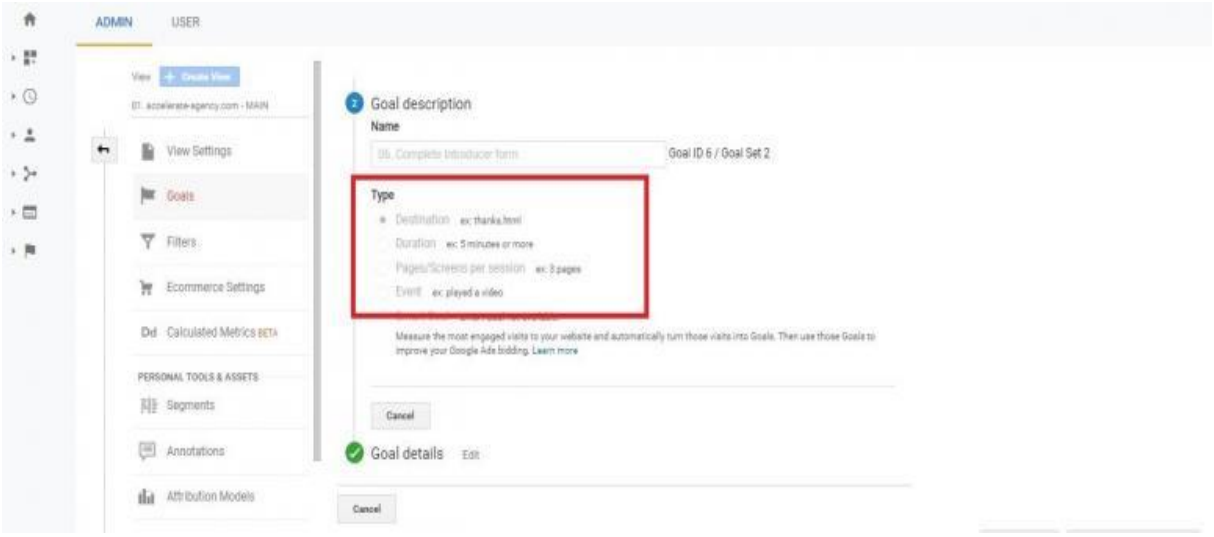


The Google Analytics Admin panel should be your initial stop. Choose the "Goals" option from there, as demonstrated above. When a new page appears, select the "+ New Goal" button there. The choice then becomes whether to make a unique goal or use an existing goal template.

Given that the current goal templates satisfy the requirements of the majority of site owners, you should be fine. You can keep track of all the common goals that

websites have with this goal template. However, it is rather simple to construct a unique aim if you so choose.

Name the objective first. Any reports that contain information about the goal will include this name. The following step is to select one of the four types of goals that Analytics supports:



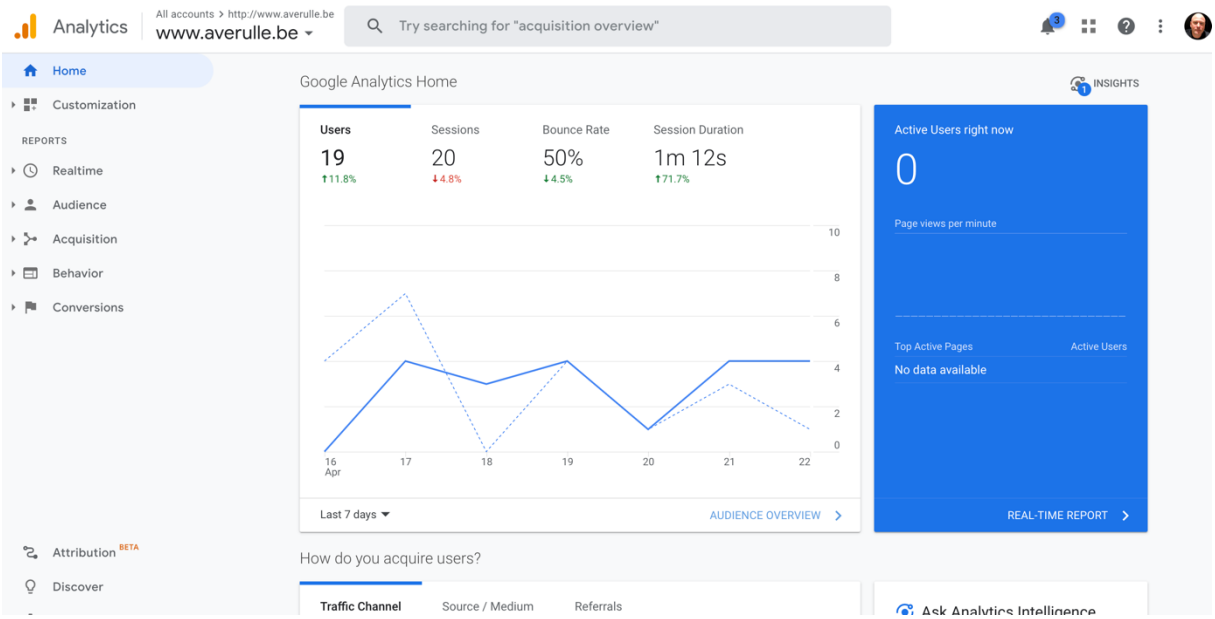
- Destination: A conversion is noted when a user accesses a specified URL.
- Duration: A conversion is noted when a user has been on the site for a predetermined period of time.
- Pages/Screens per Session: The quantity of pages or screens a user views throughout a session.
- Event: When a user takes a particular action, e.g. playing a video.

Select the type of objective you wish to set, then carry out the additional instructions. For a destination target, you can be requested to identify the URL where a visit would result in a conversion. However, you must first put up "Events" through Analytics if you want to pursue event goals (such as when viewers watch a video). This is quite elaborate and is not in the scoop of this course. If interested you can check the guide for event goals out right here: https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1033068?hl=en.

The procedure is finished by selecting the "Create Goal" button. Google Analytics will immediately begin gathering information about the objective.

Google Analytics Dashboard and Sections

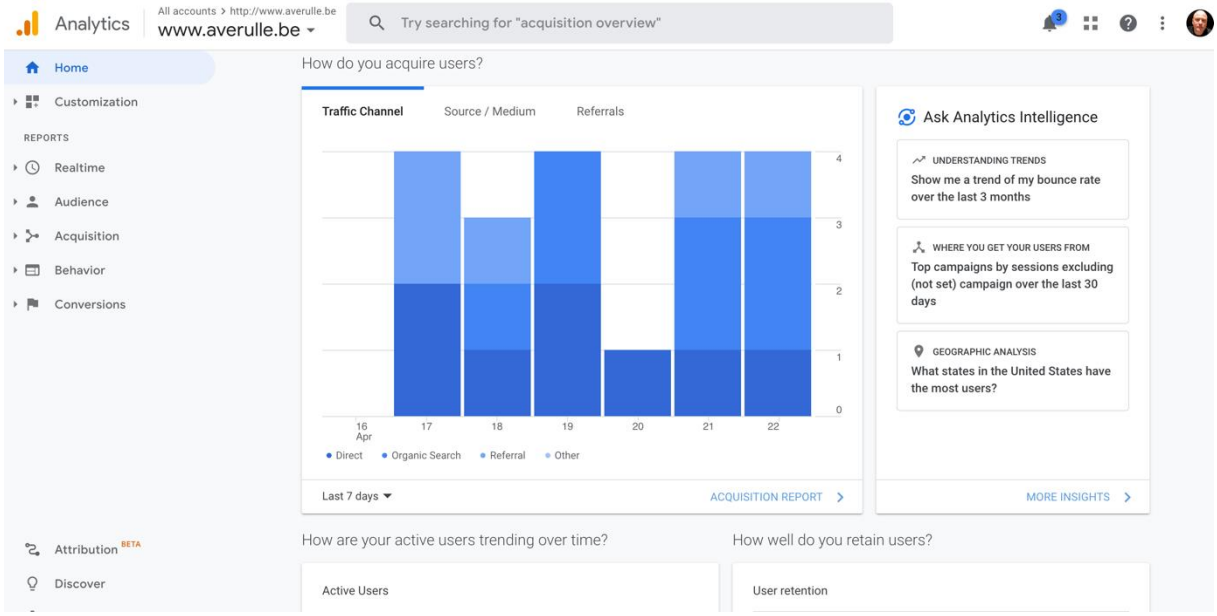
After setting up Google Analytics and all of its capabilities, you can unwind. The platform should have gathered enough information within 24 hours for you to view your initial reports.



These reports are easily accessible through the Google Analytics dashboard. The "Overview dashboard" is displayed as the dashboard's home page. Each of your visits to Analytics starts here. You can find all the information you need to use the platform on that page. Below is a basic overview of the various Google Analytics dashboards.

Overview Dashboard

Along the left side of the dashboard in this section are links to particular Analytics reports. The first insights into your site data are located on the overview dashboard's right side.

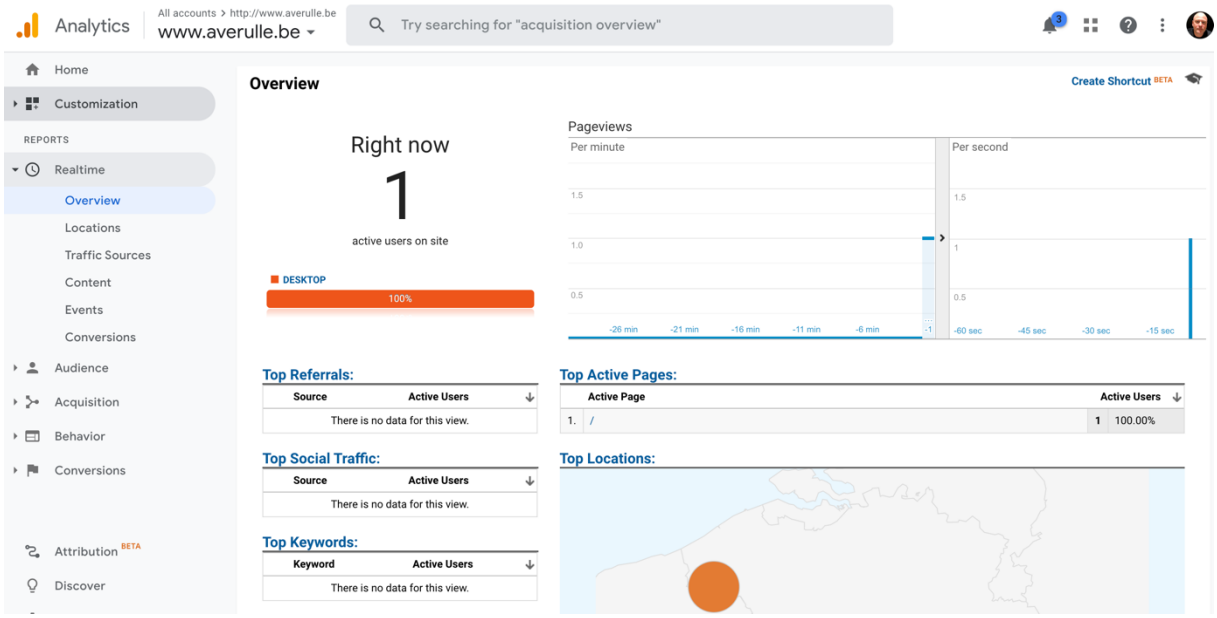


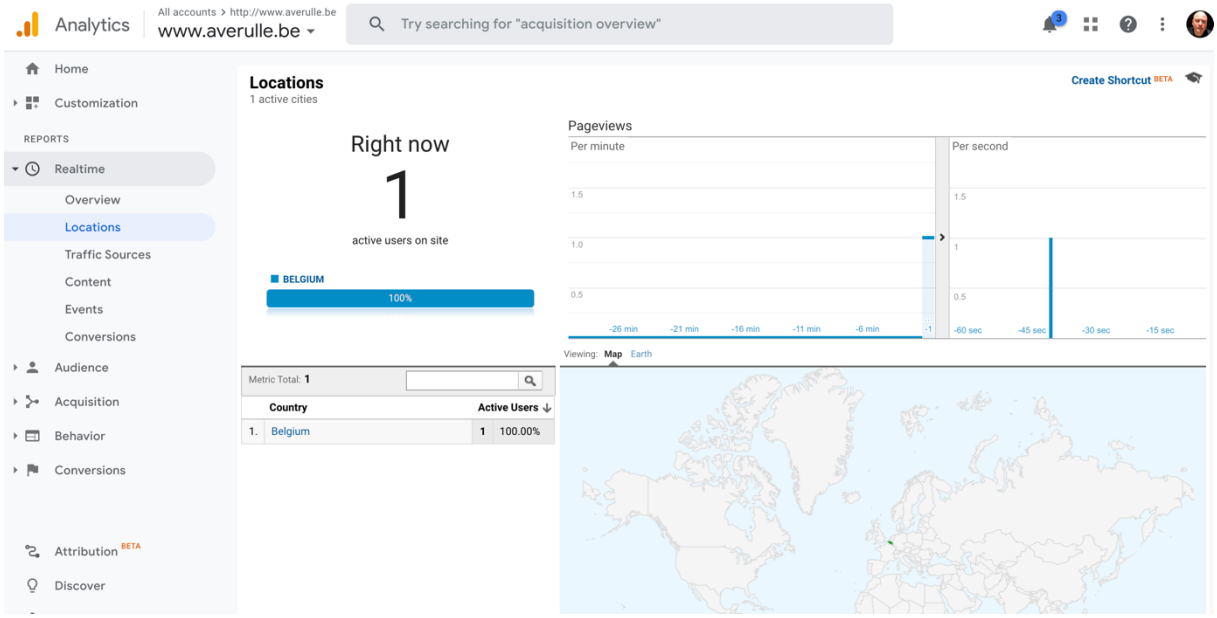
On "cards," graphs, tables, and other representations of your data are shown. They are those panels on the home page's right side. To change what the cards display, use the straightforward options associated to each. The type of data displayed and the time period for which it is displayed are both changeable.

A report falls into one of five primary categories. A dashboard exists for each category. You may get to them by selecting the appropriate link from Analytics' left-hand menu. You can get a variety of different reports from each one.

Real-Time Dashboard

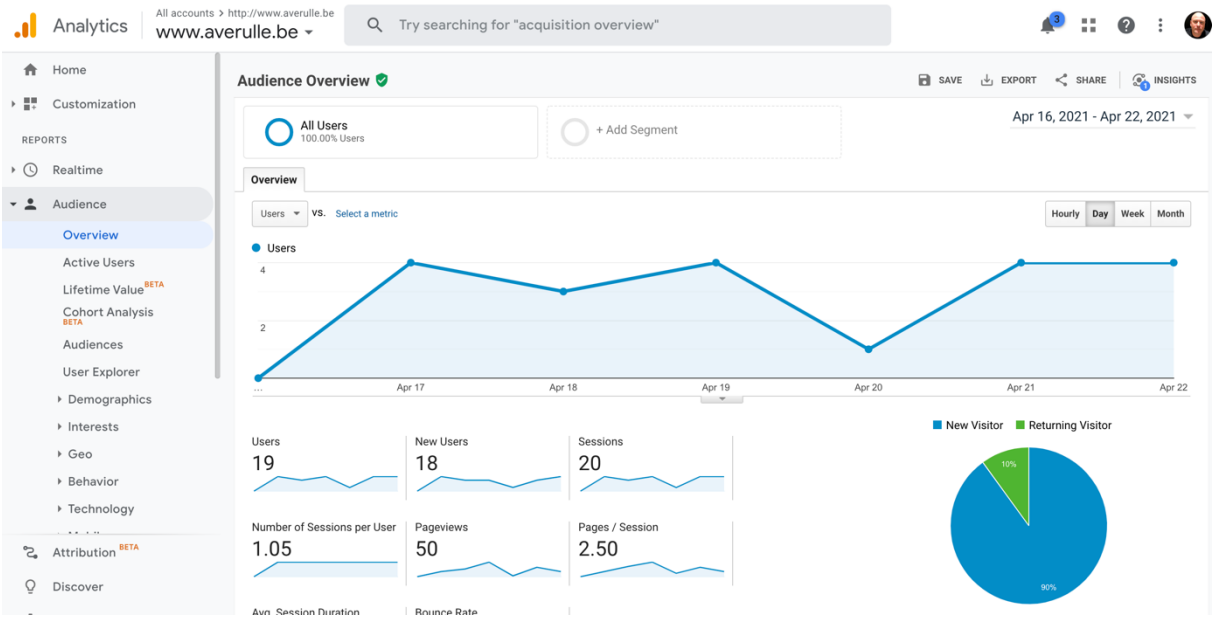
The Real-Time dashboard shows data visualizations of users who are now browsing your site in real-time. The dashboard displays the visitors' location, the material they are seeing, and the source of their traffic.





Audience Dashboard

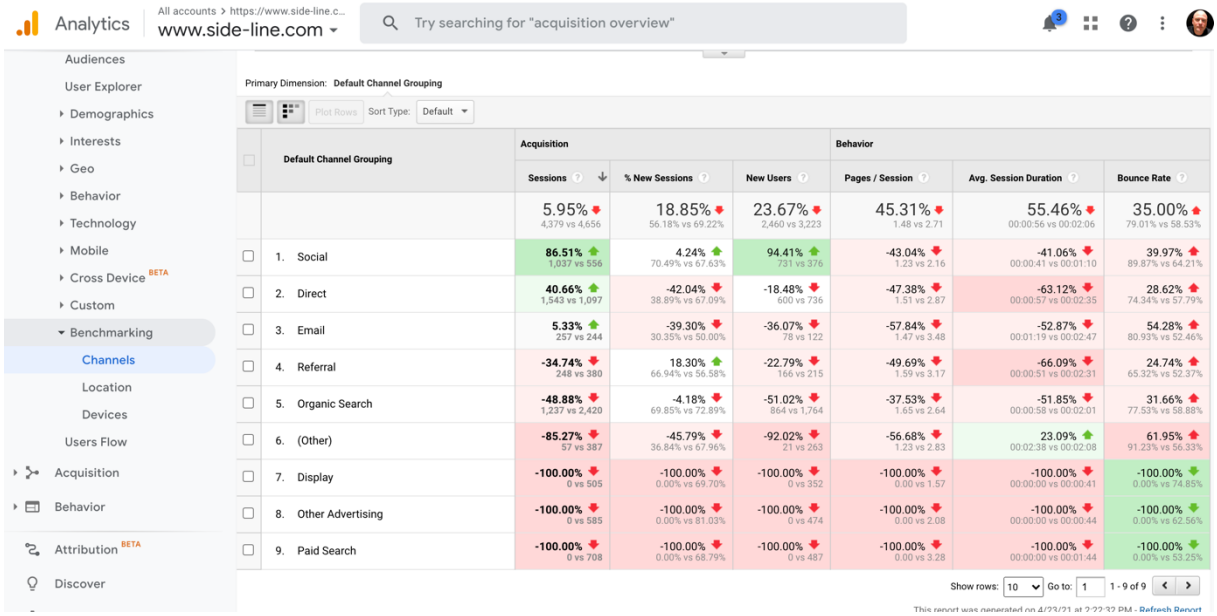
Over time, the Audience dashboard teaches you more about the visitors to your site. You can see the number of users and sessions your site has had for the selected time period, along with metrics like how long users spent on your site, how many pages they visited, what devices they used to access it, what browser they used, and their language.



There are various parts on the same dashboard that are only accessible when you are running adverts. For instance, advertisements are linked to both the demographic and interest data. It only functions when a visitor is logged into his or her Google account on the different devices. Under cross device, you may find out more about the many devices the same visitor uses to access your website.

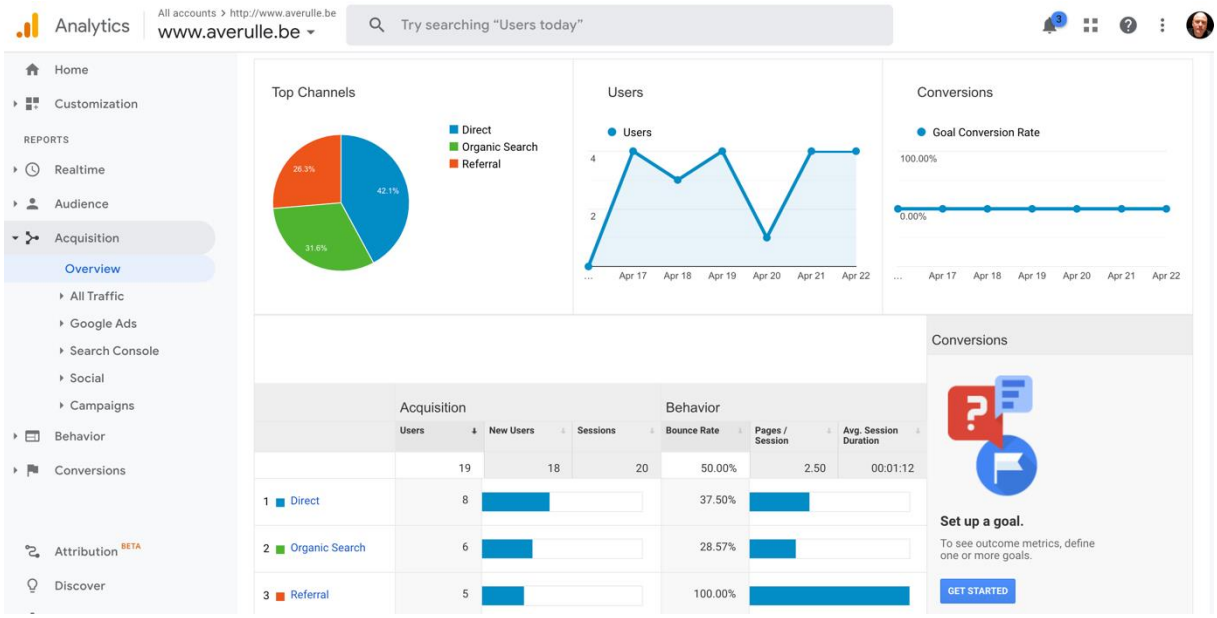
Additionally, User specified variables and Custom variables are contained in the section titled "Custom." With the launch of Google Analytic 4 properties, the newest version of Google Analytics, both are being deprecated.

Benchmarking is a very interesting section under Audience Dashboard where you can see how your site is doing over time in terms of traffic growth or decline from various channels (social media, direct traffic, email, referral, organic search, display, paid search, or other advertising) in terms of sessions, new users, and bounce rate.

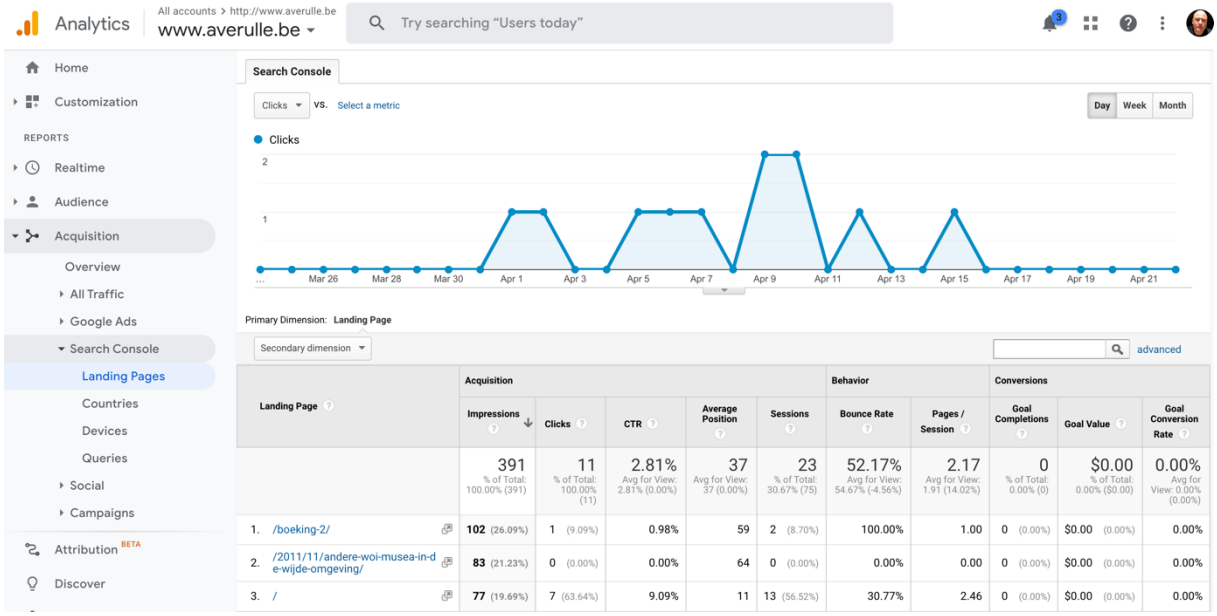


Acquisition Dashboard

Understanding how those users found your website is possible thanks to the Acquisitions dashboard. Three categories—acquisition, behaviour, and conversions—are divided into the overview dashboard's multiple dimensions and metrics.



You may learn from acquisition data how many visitors your website receives from various sources. Users' actions are reported by behaviour metrics, and conversion data shows how users from various channels behave.

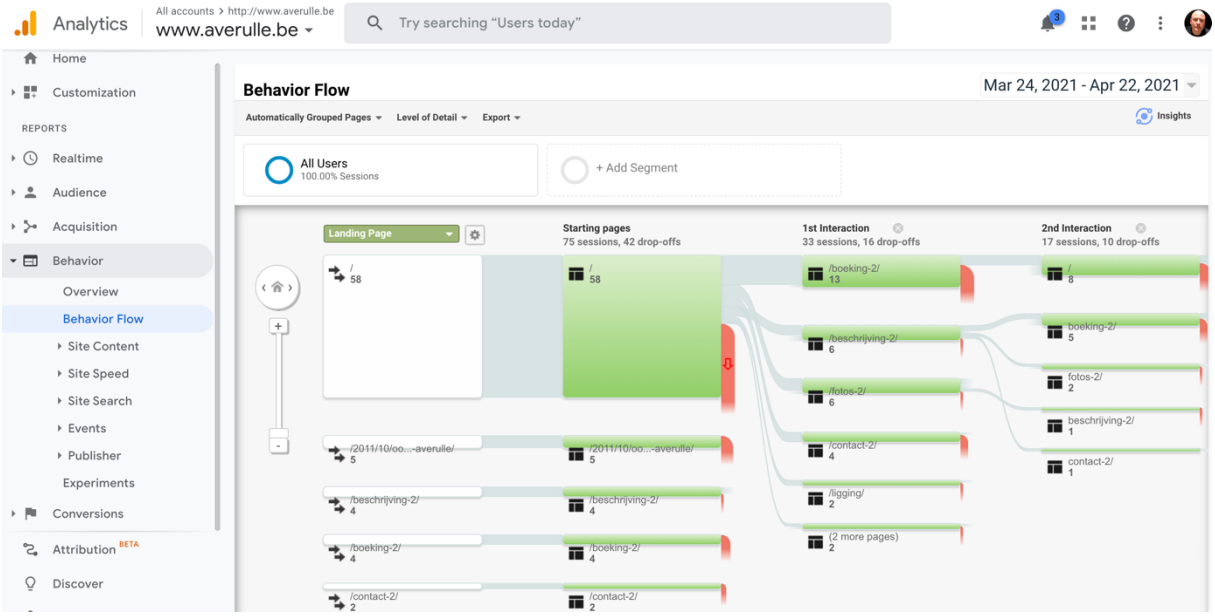


You may analyze your data in a variety of ways using the other reports on the Acquisitions dashboard, and other options focus primarily on other acquisition channels. The most significant of these are the Search Console reports, which show you how visitors found your website through organic search and the search terms they had used to find it. This might be quite helpful to determine whether your major keywords actually do drive traffic and whether any additional keywords surprisingly drive more traffic than you had anticipated. The same is true for Social, which reveals which social media sites users use to access your website.

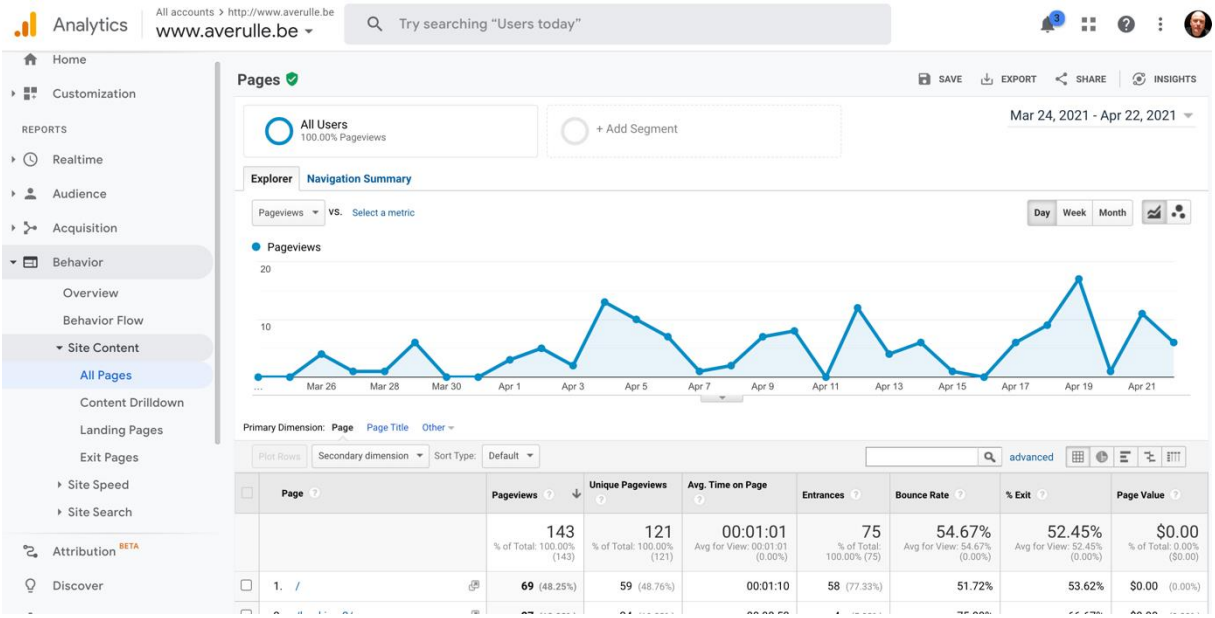
Behaviour Dashboard

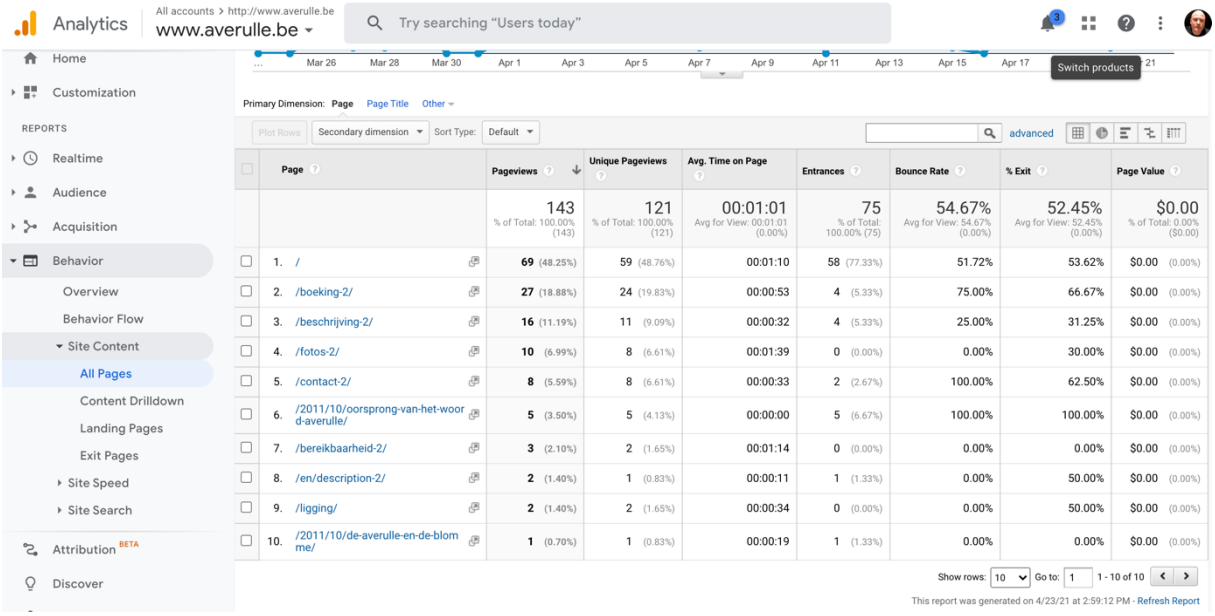
You can find more detailed information on user behavior in the Behaviour dashboard, which also provides data on page views, session length, and bounce rate. It is an addition to the Benchmarking section of the Audience Dashboard.

Under the Behaviour Flow you will find what the average journey of a visitor is. You can define the behaviour flow based on the landing page, the medium, the source, … Again, very useful to see if your internal traffic goes the way you want or if it shows that some sections are not discovered as much as you want them to be.



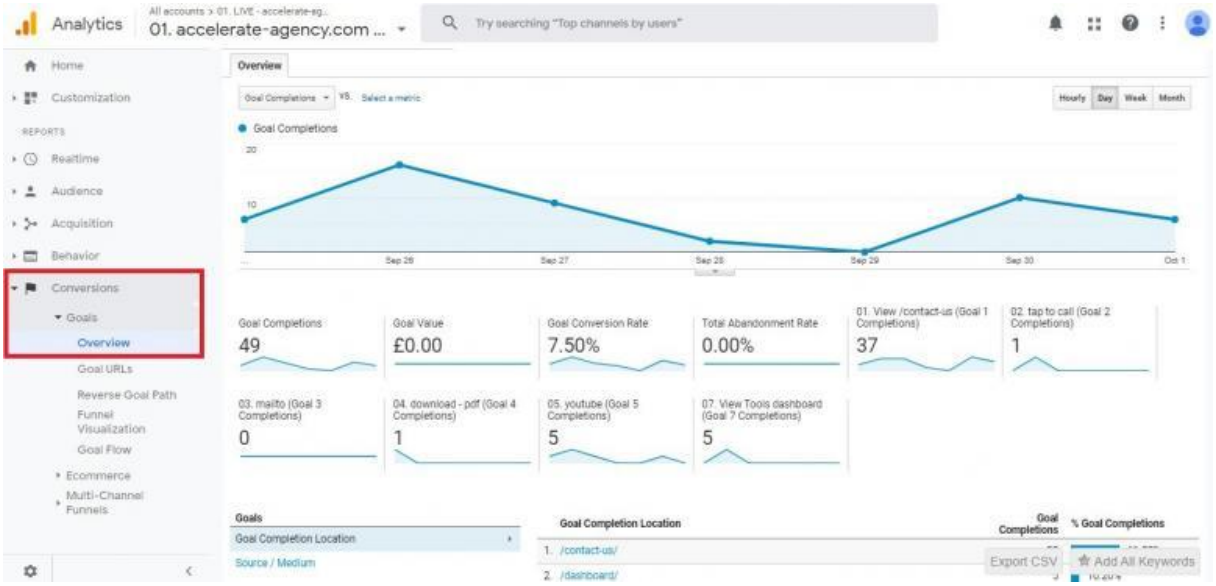
The Site Content report displays a wide range of metrics pertaining to the various pages of your website, as well as the volume of visitors to those pages. They consist of metrics like bounce rate, average time on page, and page views. These measures have a lot of potential. They let you know how well-liked your pages are. What are the takeaways from this? The reports outline the types of content that are effective and the types of material that need improvement on current pages.



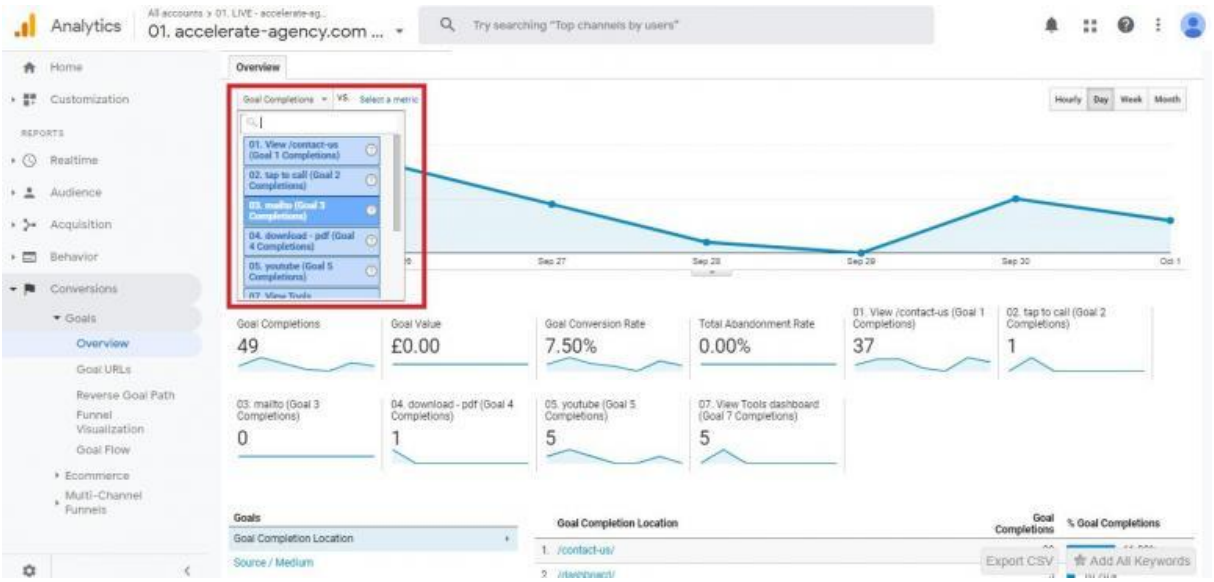


Conversion Dashboard

This section of the platform demonstrates how users of your website convert. The goals you previously set up are connected to this dashboard. The summary report displays the overall goal completions for your website as well as how they were distributed if you had specified several goals.



By using a dropdown menu, you can alter the overview report to concentrate on your goals just like you can with all other reports.



Attribution

The Attribution feature of Google Analytics is connected to advertising and makes use of the company's cutting-edge machine learning to more precisely assign credit to all ad clicks that resulted in a conversion. But only marketers can use this tool. To help you make more educated cross-channel and campaign-level budgeting decisions, this section compares attribution models. In order to comprehend the value of upper funnel ad clicks in multi-click, cross-channel journeys, it also provides cross-channel conversion paths.

Discover

This is a section in Google Analytics which can act as a great resource. It offers various tools and demos to better understand Google Analytics. Here are the ones we advise to read and check in order to dive even further in the world of analytics:

- Custom Alerts: Set up custom alerts to email you when your data changes.
- Spreadsheet Add-On: Perform advanced analysis by pulling data directly into Google Sheets.
- Analytics Academy: Learn analytics with free online courses.
- Analytics Help Centre: The official place to find tips and tutorials on using Google Analytics and answers to frequently asked questions.

- Official Analytics Blog: The source for Google news and announcements on all measurement and analytics products.
- GA Advertising Community: Official forums for all analytics products.
- Optimize: Simple and powerful A/B testing & website personalization.
- Campaign URL Builder: Easily add campaign parameters to URLs so you can track Custom Campaigns in Google Analytics.
- Tag Manager: Simple, reliable tag management that integrates easily with existing systems.
- Google Tag Assistant: Free Chrome extension that helps you make sure your Google tags are working correctly.
- GA Debugger: Show useful information in the JavaScript console by enabling the debug version of the Google Analytics JavaScript.

There are many other popular free web analytics tools such as HubSpot, Open Web Analytics, Clicky, Amplitude as well as paid tools like Hotjar, Kissmetrics, SEMrush, Matomo, Crazy Egg, Adobe Analytics and Chartbeat. According to Heinze, Fletcher, Rashid and Cruz (2020) the most used analytics tools worldwide include Google Analytics, Google Universal Analytics, Google Global Site Tag, Meta Business Suite (Previously Facebook Analytics), Google Analytics Event Tracker, Snowplow, Hotjar, Matomo, MonsterInsights, Baudu Analytics, Adobe Analytics, Yahoo Analytics and Urchin.

10.5.3.2 Social Media Analytics

Almost all social media platforms have their own metrics which are also called analytics and insights. Tourism and hospitality business that have a business account can monitor the number of visitors, likes, link clicks, viewers, followers, daily active users, monthly active users and many more. With the help of social media analytics, businesses can see how their social media advertising or social media postings and content are performing. Specific social media analytics terminology is shown in Table 4 and some of the social media analytics tools are briefly reviewed below.

Table 4: Social Media Analytics Terminology

Expression	Meaning
Reach/Impressions	How many people were shown the post
Engagement/Actions on page	Total number of times a user interacted with a page or post: clicks, shares, replies, follows, likes, links
Engagement rate	Number of engagements divided by impressions
Likes, fans, follows	Times a user followed you
Clicks	Number of clicks on the page, post, profile, hashtag, links, attached media
Reactions	Number of people reacting to, commenting on and sharing your posts (like, retweet, shares).

Source: Hanlon, 2019, p.325.

Twitter Analytics

There are various reporting dashboards available in Twitter Analytics that are free to use and measure each account's success. You may find analytics for each of your Tweets on your Tweet activity dashboard. Each Tweet's precise number of views, retweets, likes, and replies may be seen on Twitter. Twitter statistics track your account's visibility, followers, hashtag usage, and tweets. You can view the amount of engagement, the number of clicks through, retweets, favourites, and replies in addition to data on the impressions over the previous 28 days. You may download the complete data, which includes much more information and displays time stamps for tweets. Your efforts may not be as successful on Twitter as they would be on other platforms with a larger audience because Twitter is still limited to a short number of characters and only accounts for a small fraction of the market. Account Home, Tweet Activity Dashboard (TAD), Video Activity Dashboard (VAD), Campaign Dashboard, and Conversion Tracking are among Twitter's primary dashboards (https://business.twitter.com/en/advertising/analytics.html.).

Account Home: Your top tweets, mentions, and followers for any given month are highlighted in the 28-day account activity summary that is shown on the account home page. Tweets, tweet impressions, profile visits, mentions, new followers, tweets linked to you, top tweets, top media tweet, top card tweet, top mention, top follower, etc. are some examples of measured metrics.

Tweet Activity Dashboard and Video Activity Dashboard: Data about all tweets and replies, promoted advertising, impressions, engagement rate, link clicks, Retweets, likes, and replies, retention rate, view rate, and completion rate are collected in these dashboards.

Campaign Dashboard: The impressions, clicks, engagement rates, and cost per result are tracked through this dashboard. Target audience, individual campaigns, individual tweets, and objectives can all be used to segment these data.

Conversion Tracking: By monitoring the activities users take after viewing or engaging with their ads on Twitter, conversion tracking enables businesses to gauge the return on their advertising investments.

Free features include these dashboards. Businesses can access it by creating an account at either analytics.twitter.com or ads.twitter.com.

Facebook and Instagram Analytics

Meta Business Suite is a potent analytics solution for Facebook and Instagram that is still very new. It was developed to replace Facebook Business Suite and Facebook Analytics, streamlining small business account management on Facebook and Instagram. It provides a wide variety of data metrics that may be measured, including likes, engagement, reach, and demographics. You can view and comprehend the outcomes of your organic and paid social media activities on Facebook and Instagram with the use of insights in the Meta Business Suite. To determine which Facebook Page and Instagram techniques are effective and where you need to make changes, use insights to view stats, trends, and image reports. You may then make the most efficient use of your time and resources. Businesses need a business account and access to https://business.facebook.com in order to use the Meta Business Suite. The following metrics are provided for Facebook and Instagram by insights in Meta Business Suite.

- The "Insights" area of the Meta Business Suite provides information on the coverage of each post as well as the total reach of the page on Facebook and Instagram.

- The "Overview" page provides audience statistics. The amount of likes on your Facebook page during the previous 28 days, broken down by age and gender, are shown here.
- The "Results" column shows the evolution of Page Reach over time.
- The "Content" area provides detailed statistics on the number of likes, comments, and reposts for each post.
- A target audience report is provided in the "Audience" section. You can create a Facebook or Instagram audience profile based on the report data. The tool offers demographic information including age, gender, the top cites, and the top nations.

YouTube Analytics

Businesses must comprehend their audience and how viewers interact with their videos if they want to have a successful YouTube channel. You can learn a lot about your audience through YouTube Analytics, including who they are, what they like, and the kinds of material you should make to succeed. If your company has a YouTube channel, you can obtain YouTube channel data at https://studio.youtube.com. Under the Analytics tab on YouTube, there are four sections: 1) Overview (displaying views, watch hours, and subscribers); 2) Content (displaying views, impressions, impression click-through rate, and average view duration); 3) Audience (displaying returning viewers, new viewers, unique viewers, and subscribers); and 4) Research (displaying searches across YouTube, your viewers' searches, and saved searches). You may track a variety of real-time metrics with Google Ads reporting if you produce a video ad and set up a paid YouTube advertising campaign. This tool offers an analytics dashboard that displays impressions, website conversions, store visits, views, and clicks in addition to who you're reaching. Businesses must have a Google Ads account in order to use Google Ads reporting. On the plus side, YouTube Analytics has a user-friendly interface, thorough information, and the ability to download statistics. On the down side, all other data have at least a 2-day delay before statistics are displayed, with the exception of the real-time portion. Additionally, many functions are hidden and require some digging to be found, which is a problem with numerous Google services.

Numerous additional social media analytics platforms, including Hootsuite Analytics, Iconosquare, Keyhole, and HypeAuditor, offer comparable features.

10.5.3.3 E-Mail Analytics

Email analytics is a method of tracking and analysing emails in terms of mail delivery, engagement, and conversions with the help of software tools. Businesses can understand the performance of their e-mail marketing campaigns and improve them over time. There are paid and free e-mail analytics tools such as campaignmonitor.com, emailit.com and mailchimp.com that tourism and hospitality businesses can use. Some of e-mail tools also allow businesses to share their newsletter, offers or other information through social media (Hanlon, 2019). Mailchimp is one among these programs: a platform for marketing automation and an email marketing service. Businesses can use Mailchimp to see which messages for email and advertisements were successful. It is a very easy tool for beginners and is used by a lot of companies thanks to its integration in various shopping tools in order to execute its automation process. It works in most of the web browsers, so you do not need to download it. General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)[2] rules should be respected at all time when using this and any other emailing tool. Mailchimp is free for 2000 contacts and 10000 emails per month (with ads). Businesses can import their own mail template, multiple integration with your current online presence, access to complete comparative metrics. There is a dedicated module for e-mail marketing (Module 9) and more detailed information about e-mail analytics is given in that module.

10.5.3.4 Search Engine Advertising Analytics

Businesses can monitor the effectiveness of their paid advertising and communication campaigns using search advertising analytics. Clicks, impressions, average cost per click, click through rate, conversions, conversion rate, and cost per conversion are common search advertising indicators (Hanlon, 2019). Google Ads is

[2] European Commission. (2020, March). *Rules for Business and Organizations.* https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-topic/data-protection/reform/rules-business-and-organisations_en

the most well-known example of a search engine advertising analytics tool, but Bing, Yahoo, Amazon, Trip Advisor, and Yelp also have their own versions.

In addition to the analytics tools mentioned above there are many other software tools to capture and analyse online content and big data. These software tools can capture and analyse both qualitative and quantitative data. Keywords, feelings and sentiments can also be measured through such analytics tool. For example, online reputation management tool of TRUSTYOU capture guests' sentiments around different topics regarding your business from online sources to reveal essential insights into the guest experience. With Google Alerts, businesses can receive notifications every time their names are mentioned anywhere on the Web. Google Alerts is completely free and easy to use (https://www.google.com/alerts). Additionally, text can be analyzed to reveal feelings in customer reviews and comments using tools like HubSpot's Service Hub, Quick Search, Repustate, Lexalytics, Critical Mention, Brandwatch, Social Mention, Sentiment Analyzer, MAXG, Awario, Talkwalker, Social Searcher, and Rosette.

10.6 Evaluating Online Performance and Taking Action

Once the data regarding online marketing metrics are collected with appropriate online tools, they should be analysed and evaluated with regard to the key performance indicators or metrics chosen for the digital channels. Different metrics can be used to measure the performance of each digital channel associated with digital marketing objectives. For example, number of views and likes may be good indicators for creating awareness in the social media but conversion rates may be a better metric for measuring the performance of a website. If digital marketing objectives are not met, corrective action should be taken regarding the digital channel used, the marketing and communication content, the design of the website or the goods and services offered.

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https://www.nicva.org/resource/measuring-the-performance-of-your-digital-channels

https://neilpatel.com/ubersuggest/

https://lsigraph.com/

https://ads.google.com/home/tools/keyword-planner/

https://travelseo.net/keywords-for-travel-and-tourism/

https://engaiodigital.com/what-is-web-analytics/

https://travelseo.net/keywords-for-travel-and-tourism/

https://keywordtool.io/

https://blog.hootsuite.com/instagram-analytics-tools-business/

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google_Analytics#Privacy

https://www.webmasterworld.com/analytics/3227679.htm

https://engaiodigital.com/what-is-web-analytics/

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_analytics

https://business.twitter.com/en/advertising/analytics.html

Supplementary Resources

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VeRu6CVi1dE
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9JjKucBpUCg
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mXcQ7rVn3ro
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9m45nVsvvEY
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bUe59yXheQ0
- https://www.checkfront.com/visualizing-your-booking-funnel-with-google-analytics.

Google Analytics and GA4: Improve your online sales by better understanding customer data and how customers interact with your website, Pittman, Christopher, 2021

Google Analytics Kickstarter Guide, Grigor Yovov, 2021

Social Media Analytics and Practical Applications: The Change to the Competition Landscape, Subodha Kumar, Liangfei Qiu, 2021

Understanding Google Analytics for Business Growth: The Essential Guide to Google Analytics for Businesses (360 Degree Marketing for Business Growth), Scott Jones, 2021

Assessment Questions

1. Which of the following tool can be used to measure the interaction of consumers with a hotel's website?
   a) Facebook Analytics
   b) Twitter Analytics
   c) Google Analytics
   d) Pay Per Click
   e) E-Mail Analytics

2. If I want to measure the ad spent per keyword for hotel bookings, I should
   a) link Google Adsense with Google Analytics
   b) link Facebook Insights with Google Analytics
   c) link Twitter Analytics with Google Adwords
   d) **link Google Analytics with Google Adwords**
   e) divide my spent by the number of bookings

3. To measure my site speed, I use _____.
   - a site speed checker
   - **the Behaviour tab in Google Analytics**
   - the Acquisition tab in Google Analytics
   - my watch

4. Site speed refers to _____
   - the speed of your server
   - the speed of your plugins
   - the speed of your html
   - **the speed of a page load**
   - the speed of script load

5. When a web page load is slow, I do not check the url structure.
   (**T**/F)

6. To avoid being flagged for spamming the bounce rate of my mailing list should be higher than 2,5%.
   (T/**F**)

7. Order the following steps of page tagging:
   A. Deploy your tags.
   B. Determine business requirements.
   C. Maintain your website tagging strategy.
   D. Document your tags and variables.

a) ABCD b) **BDAC** c) CDAB d) DABC

8. Please order the steps for managing web analytics and digital channel performance

   A. Identifying metrics or key performance indicators to measure and improve website and digital channel performance.
   B. Determining business needs and digital marketing objectives
   C. Evaluating online performance and taking action.
   D. Using appropriate tools and analytics software to collect and analyse data.

a) ABCD **b) BADC** c) DCBA d) DABC

9. Please match the concepts with the correct definitions

a) Click analytics	1) Data-driven approach to identify the key touch-points where your customers have interacted with your company and products in the course of buying stages
b) Page tagging	2) Basic information on your audience's (website visitors) language and geographic location.
c) Geolocation	3) Tool that allows you to mark or categorize a page or groups of pages on your website.
d) Customer lifecycle analytics	4) It is a feature that measures and reports where people click or tap on websites, apps, and emails.

a) a3, b4, c1, d2 b) a4, b3, c1, d2 c) a1, b2, c4, d3 d) **a4, b3, c2, d1**

10. Please match the concepts with the correct definitions

a) Bounce rate	1) The cost of acquiring a customer online
b) Impressions	2) Number of times online content was displayed to users
c) Pay per click	3) Percentage of visitors who only view one page on a website
d) Cost per conversion	4) A model of internet advertising in which advertisers pay a fee each time one of their ads is clicked

a) **a3, b2, c4, d1** b) a4, b3, c1, d2 c) a1, b2, c4, d3 d) a4, b3, c2, d1

Module 11: Online Public Relations and Reputation Management for Small and Medium Sized Tourism Enterprises

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Learning Objectives

After reading this unit, the reader will be able to:

- understand the nature and importance of online public relations and reputation management for the tourism and hospitality businesses;
- identify the changing role of consumers in the light of web 2.0;
- infer the impacts of customer reviews and electronic word of mouth on tourism and hospitality businesses;
- list the differences between traditional and new foundations of public relations and reputation management;
- explain the impact of online reviews on consumers' attitudes towards tourism and hospitality businesses;
- monitor and manage online reviews and communications in the tourism and hospitality industry.

11.0 Introduction

The internet has changed the way businesses conduct business and communicate with their customers. Therefore, using the internet for communication and doing business has become a necessity for business success. The amount and content of information about companies on the websites of third parties and companies are increasing rapidly. In many industries, consumer and organisational purchases are made online and internet presence and content affect purchasing decisions of customers. Therefore, trust, ethics, and transparency have become very important. Communication and the use of effective communication techniques are no longer the exclusive domain of public relations. It is important for public relations as it is open to anyone with access to the Internet (Philips & Young, 2009).

In the new online public relations and reputation management approach, the gaps between disciplines such as marketing, customer service, public relations, human resources and management are filled with the unifying feature of social media. Now, a public relations specialist has to manage the entire digital strategy of a business (Ryan, 2014).

There are many online platforms where consumers can evaluate any business and/or product. Although the evaluations made on these platforms are generally classified as positive and negative, some sites also allow for ranking through points or stars. Positive comments generally direct potential consumers to purchase the product and/or service offered by the relevant business. On the other hand, negative comments can cause potential consumers to hesitate. Negative consumer comments that are not taken into account in a timely manner by businesses are effective enough to harm the reputation of the business (Larson & Draper, 2015).

The Internet makes a significant contribution to saving costs, increasing productivity and stimulating economic growth. Therefore, it is critically important for public relations to benefit from the internet for economic success and social development (Philips & Young, 2009). Speed is an indicator of how businesses are exposed to online ideas. In other words, the more visible and common a company is online, the faster the bad (or good) news about it (Pownall, 2015). This module explains online public relations and reputation management and focuses solely on online customer reviews and electronic word of mouth as part of managing online public relations strategy.

11.2 Online Public Relations

Today, there are two main types of public relations: traditional model and interactive model. The traditional model is based on building relationships by distributing press releases and press kits tools to media representatives and other publishers. The interactive model uses social media, blogs and other influencing factors in addition to the tools used by the traditional model (Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International [HSMAI], 2018). There are many ways a business public relations officer can communicate using internet technologies. The internet brings public relations to the focus of corporate engineering, corporate governance,

company and brand relations, reputation management, and other management-related issues (Philips & Young, 2009).

Online public relations can be expressed as the maximization of positive comments and reviews on third-party sites that can be visited by the target audience, such as businesses, brands, products or media sites, social networks, and blogs. In addition, online public relations include monitoring and managing the comments and reviews about businesses, brands, goods or services, and responding to these comments and evaluations when necessary (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

Larson and Draper (2015, p. 230) explain that timeliness, transparency, and training are critical for an effective immediate response to negative consumer comments.

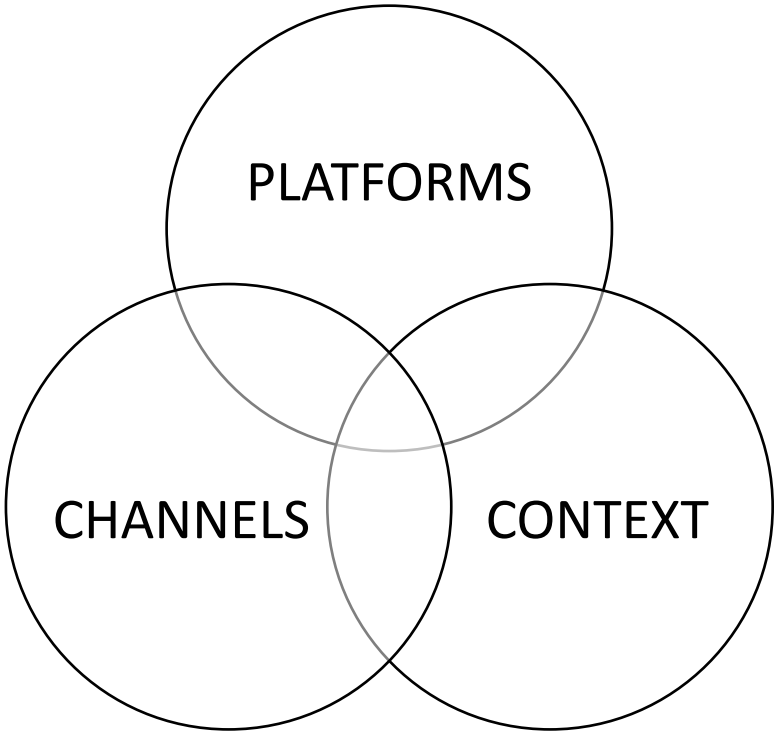
- Timeliness; with a rapid response, the business can direct the attention of the press to focus on the reaction to that negativity rather than the negativity itself.
- Transparency; if the negative situation is caused by the fault of the enterprise, the enterprise should take this responsibility by accepting its mistake and then focus on the actions to solve the negative situation.
- Training; employees should be trained by the company on how to react in any negative situation.

Consumers express their opinions about any brand, good or bad, online. Wikipedia, forum sites, blogs, social media sites, and online rating sites are some of the environments where consumers express their opinions and complaints about any business, product and/or service. Therefore, it is very difficult for any business to keep track of the large number of reviews published on all these platforms. For this reason, monitoring tools developed to follow the reviews published in online environments can be used. Thus, the business can respond in a timely manner by monitoring where, when and by whom the evaluations are made (Larson & Draper, 2015).

Much of the internet or online world is dependent on information provided on websites, e-mail, wikis, and blogs accessed through various tools. In addition to increased information, access to this information has become easier, threatening traditional intermediaries. This change in the understanding of public relations is an issue that the businesses should consider in terms of the internet strategy of the business. In other words, this is not just about the company's presence on the web,

but its presence on social media in the local environment (Philips & Young, 2009, p. 62).

Figure 1. The Three Elements of Online Public Relations

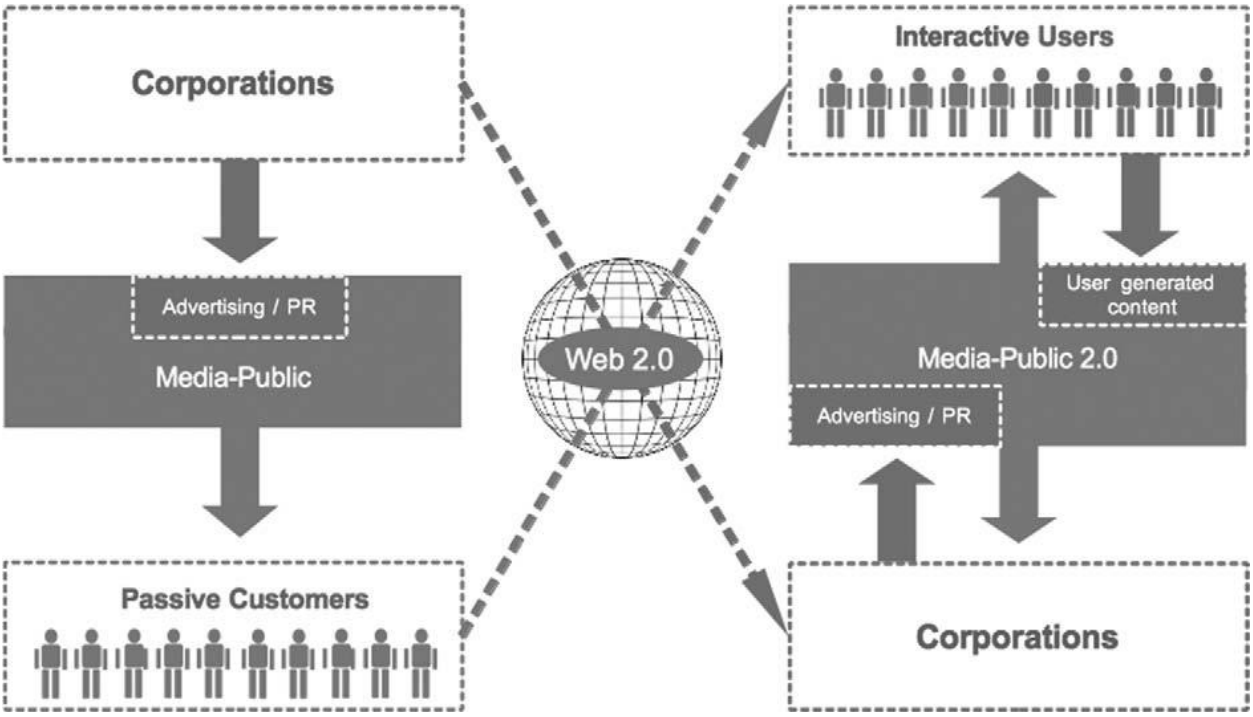


Source: Philips and Young, 2009, p. 94.

The three elements of online public relations shown in Figure 1 are explained below (Philips & Young, 2009, p.95).

- 'Platforms are the devices we use to access the internet and its knowledge. These may be a mobile phone, PC, laptop, computer game, television set, in-car entertainment, e-poster, e-book or many other things now and in the future.
- Channels include the means by which we access information, like SMS, e-mail, instant messaging, websites, social networks (like Myspace and Bebo), blogs, Twitter (micro-blogs), wikis, virtual environments and dozens more.
- The context is important too. Is access at home, travelling, at work, in company, alone; when interactivity is easy or hard; in different moods; in different time zones and places and when time is at a premium or not'?

Figure 2: Change of Communication with Web 2.0



Source: Horster and Gottschalk, 2012, p. 230.

Figure 2 shows the change in communication with the arrival of web 2.0. Horster and Gottschalk (2012) state that there has been a great change in the sharing of knowledge. In this process of change, one-way communication from business to consumer, which we encounter in the traditional marketing approach, has been replaced by a versatile communication form that allows consumers to express their thoughts about any business, brand, goods or services via Web 2.0. Consumers who are passive in the first form of communication become active in the second form of communication.

Due to its capacity to disseminate vast amounts of data and information in a short time, the internet has an impressive power over the relations and reputations of all kinds of organizations, from the smallest business to the government of a country (Philips, 2001). According to Charlesworth (2018) an effective digital transformation is not a process that only one area or department can carry out. In addition, digital transformation is not about technology, but about the strategic use of technology. Major components of digital transformation include big data, reverse marketing, mobile applications, internet of things, and automation of business processes.

11.3 Online Reputation Management

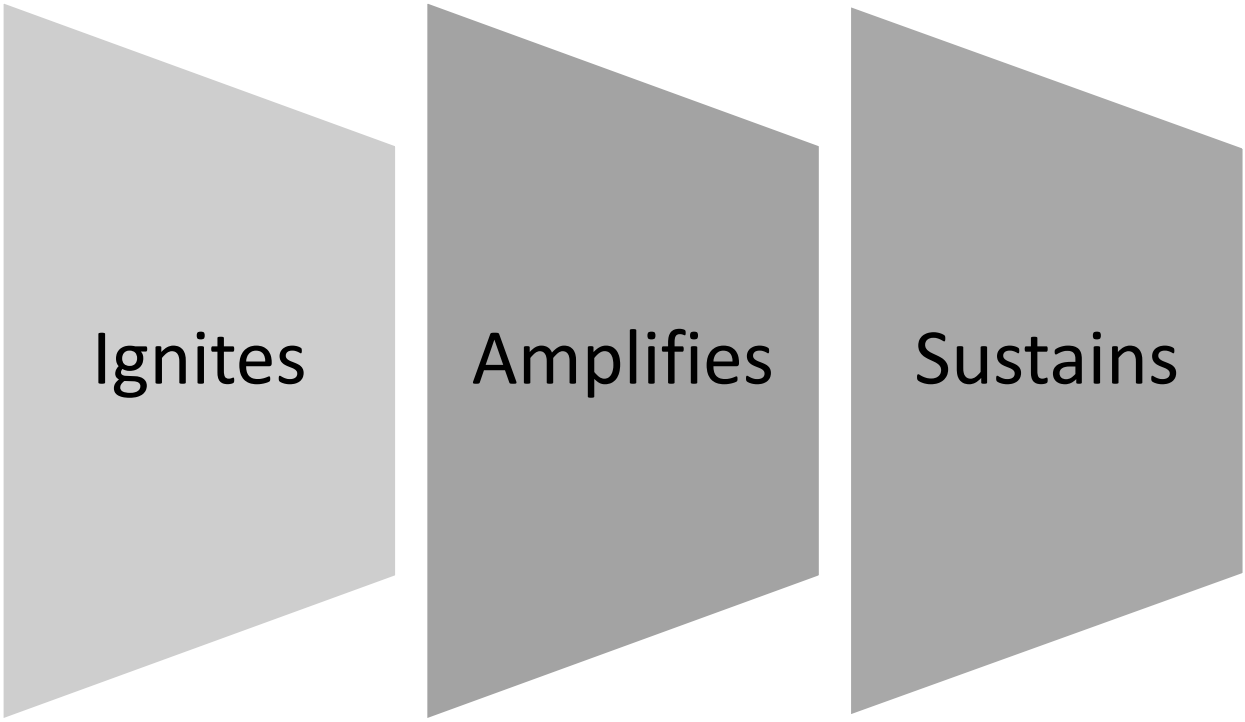
Reputation is recognized as a product of the communication process. However, reputation is not only formed as a result of product experience, but also shaped by social interaction (Horster & Gottschalk, 2012). Reputation, a concept used in marketing management, generally refers to the overall negative or positive perception and image of a business in the market (Pollák et al., 2016). Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019 p. 588) defined online reputation management as “controlling the reputation of an organization through monitoring and controlling messages placed about the organization.”

Reputation and trust are two determining factors for successful e-commerce. Achieving reputation and trust depends on the knowledge consumers have. Consumers either obtain this information by directly experiencing it or obtain it from third parties who have experienced it (Sabater & Sierra, 2005). Reputation is being studied in many areas with different approaches. Two main factors are effective in attaching importance to the issue of reputation. The first is the impact of reputation on decision making. The second is the acceptance of reputation as the entity of a business (Marchiori & Cantoni, 2012). In a study conducted by Kim and Lennon (2013) on consumers, it was concluded that business reputation has a significant positive effect on consumers’ emotions and a significant negative effect on perceived risk.

In the digital world of online environments, consumers who demand any goods or services have great power. Reputation, which has a very fragile structure, can lead to irrecoverable consequences with a mistake made, whether simple or not. For this reason, businesses can follow the flow of information about their products in the digital world, preventing the flow of information that may damage the reputation of the business or at least keep the damage to a minimum (Pollák et al., 2016).

Figure 3 shows the role of social media in shaping an organization’s reputation.

Figure 3: Role of Social Media in Shaping Reputation



Source: Pownall, 2015, p. 19.

Pownall (2015) states that social media has three roles in shaping an organization's reputation. The first role is named 'ignite'; People's dissatisfaction with the organization is triggered because of something that any member of the organization does or says online, or because of a professional and/or unethical campaign. The second role is called 'amplify'; People's thoughts and feelings about the organization are expressed. For example, an organization with poor customer service will be routinely condemned, even the intensity of feelings expressed by people will reach a level of frustration and/or anger. The third and final role is titled 'sustain'; The situations that occur in the first two roles and are undesirable for the organization come up again and again at certain time intervals in the social media environment. This is because, as in real life, time and place barriers are not present in the internet environment. In the virtual environment, which also includes social media, ebb and tide is experienced as in the real world. In other words, with the addition of new people to any discussion topic about the organization, the topic of discussion comes up again. As the number of people talking about the topic decreases, the organization falls off the agenda. The virtual environment causes this process to continue in a cycle, just like the tide event.

As opposed to traditional advertising, promotional tweets are cheap and can be focused on geographic, gender, interest or other factors. In addition, these tweets can be followed and generated in real time (Pownall, 2015). Reputation management is a role in which the process is carried out by experts in this field in order to protect the business reputation from the risk of damage when something goes wrong. This role is usually carried out by the public relations department. On the other hand, when evaluated from a wider perspective, the reputation of the business and/or the brand is the responsibility of all people working in the business. For this reason, everyone must do her/his job correctly, that is, they must fulfil their duty to meet customer needs. Because when the reputation of the business is damaged more or less, there is usually not much to do (Charlesworth, 2018).

Larson and Draper (2015) argue that positive content about the business brand is an important part of online reputation management. The authors offer nine suggestions for better performance in brand searches with positive content (Larson & Draper, 2015, p. 232):

1. ‘Corporate blog
2. Corporate website
3. Corporate ads
4. Social media profiles
5. Directory listings
6. Charity microsites
7. Customer support site
8. Product microsites
9. Cause microsites’

Inconsistencies and differences in the information given cause deterioration in relationships with loss of confidence, trust, reputation, and fame (Philips & Young, 2009). The variability of online thinking presents opportunities and challenges to businesses. In other words, while people accept online comments about businesses without questioning them too much, they are open to being persuaded by the correct information to be given by businesses (Pownall, 2015).

Ryan (2014) lists the traditional and new foundations of public relations and reputation management as follows:

Traditional;

- Start with strategy and an understanding of your audience,
- Know the influencers, understand their pressures, gain their trust,
- The humble press release – it still works,
- Creativity that gets cut-through: surprise and delight your audience, and make it as simple and low-cost as you like,
- Damage limitation: when crisis strikes, be proactive.

New;

- Integrate your idea and manage reputation from top down, and across media,
- Get to grips with content marketing,
- Break down the 'inattention' barrier,
- Don't bank on free media.

Marchiori and Cantoni (2012) argue that reputation is one of the most important success factors for any business, thanks to its trust and cooperation with stakeholders. However, the authors state that two basic elements are necessary for business reputation, such as organizational culture and identity.

Online reputation management is not a tool or method used to evade business responsibilities from bad practices. Therefore, business managers should consider the comments and reviews about their businesses and use them for the improvement of the goods and services they offer. Negative comments and reviews that harm the business must be responded in a timely manner. The subject of complaint can be eliminated through the responses to consumer comments and evaluations. This can turn customer complaints into satisfaction and customer loyalty (Larson & Draper, 2015).

11.4 Online Customer Reviews

Due to the relationship between online consumer reviews and online purchasing behaviour, online evaluations are of great interest in research in tourism and hospitality industry. Management of online evaluations, which have an important share in the decision-making process of consumers, is of great importance for businesses (Schuckert et al., 2015).

Leong et al. (2019) state that online evaluations differ in content and polarity. The authors state that online evaluations are divided into two as general evaluations and detailed evaluations in terms of content. It is also argued that the evaluations in terms of polarity can be between two poles as positive evaluations and negative evaluations. Consumers use online platforms to express themselves and the comments and evaluations stated in online environments have an impact on consumers' attitudes towards a hotel (Ladhari & Michaud, 2015). While positive comments and evaluations improve the attitude towards the hotel, negative comments and evaluations cause a negative attitude towards the hotel. HSMAI (2018, p. 96), states that the basis of success on customer comment and review sites is based on five Rs. They are as follows (HSMAI, 2018, p. 96):

- 'RATIO: Number of reviews relative to the size of the property.
- RATING: User-generated score/rating of the property.
- RECENCY: Number of recent reviews.
- RELEVANCY: The clout/authority of the person writing the reviews (usually determined by quantity of reviews).
- RESPONSE: Frequency and quality of management responses to reviews (on sites where applicable)'.

Managers, who know how to react to online consumer comments will benefit the business, and make adjustments in management models to achieve the goals of the business (Perez-Aranda et al., 2019). With the new millennium, it has become impossible for tourism and other businesses operating in other industries to have full control over their digital assets due to the emergence of user-generated content. Because users who are accepted as guests by tourism and hospitality businesses can express their thoughts and perceptions about hotels online. Therefore, positive evaluations, management responses, up-to-date content and photos can be stated as the main factors contributing to the online evaluation strategy (HSMAI, 2018).

11.5 Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM)

Consumers traditionally transmitted their experiences of any product to people around them, including friends and family members. With the development of the internet and social media, many websites have become places where people's

opinions, suggestions, complaints, positive and negative evaluations about the products they purchase are shared (Chakraborty, 2019, p. 3465). Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019, p. 94) define electronic word-of-mouth as “an extension of traditional face-to-face word-of-mouth, whereby communication exchanges between individuals take place in digital environments.”

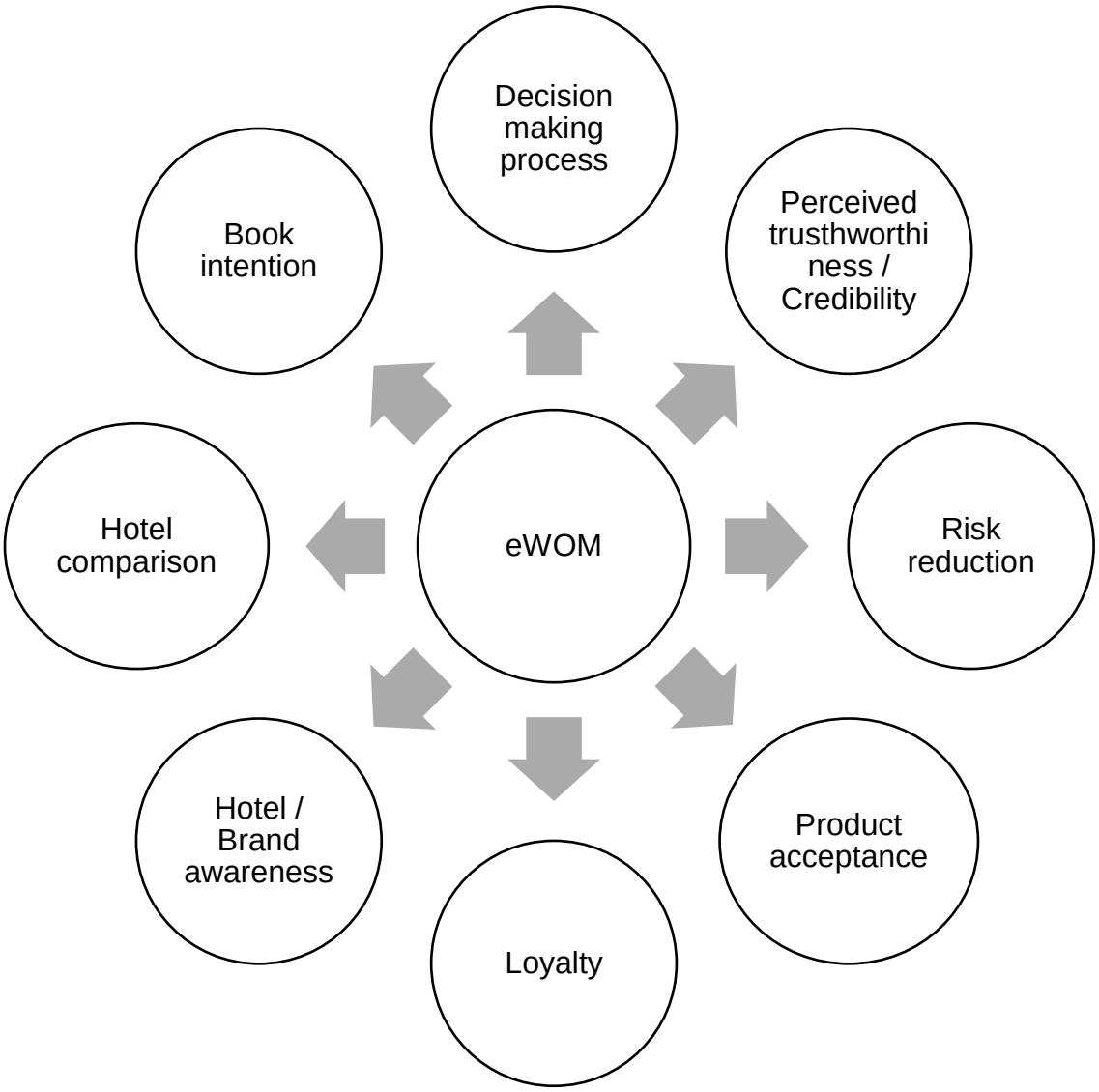
Word-of-mouth and electronic word-of-mouth are defined by Ismagilova et al., (2017, pp. 7–18) as follows:

> Word-of-mouth (WOM): “Oral, person-to-person communication between a receiver and a communicator, whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, concerning a brand, product, service, or organization.”
>
> Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM): “eWOM is the dynamic and ongoing information exchange process between potential, actual, or former consumers regarding a product, service, brand, or company, which is available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet.”

Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) has become widespread with the advent of Web 2.0 and cloud applications. Therefore, eWOM can be an effective marketing channel for managers who carry out the marketing activities of hotel businesses. When the data obtained from 497 guests of 10 hotels operating in Kuala Lumpur city of Malaysia are analysed; positive and negative eWOM, user’s knowledge and involvement in the process, income and education level, and perceived reliability factors are found to be important determinants that explain 81% of guests’ intention to book (Leong et al., 2019).

Figure 4 shows the impacts of the electronic word of mouth. eWOM has an impact on many issues from decision-making to business loyalty. Therefore, small and medium-sized hotel business managers who do not have the facilities of large international hotel chains should pay attention to eWOM. Thus, direct information flow can be provided on many subjects ranging from brand awareness towards hotels, to guests’ perception of reliability or their booking intentions (Leong et al., 2019).

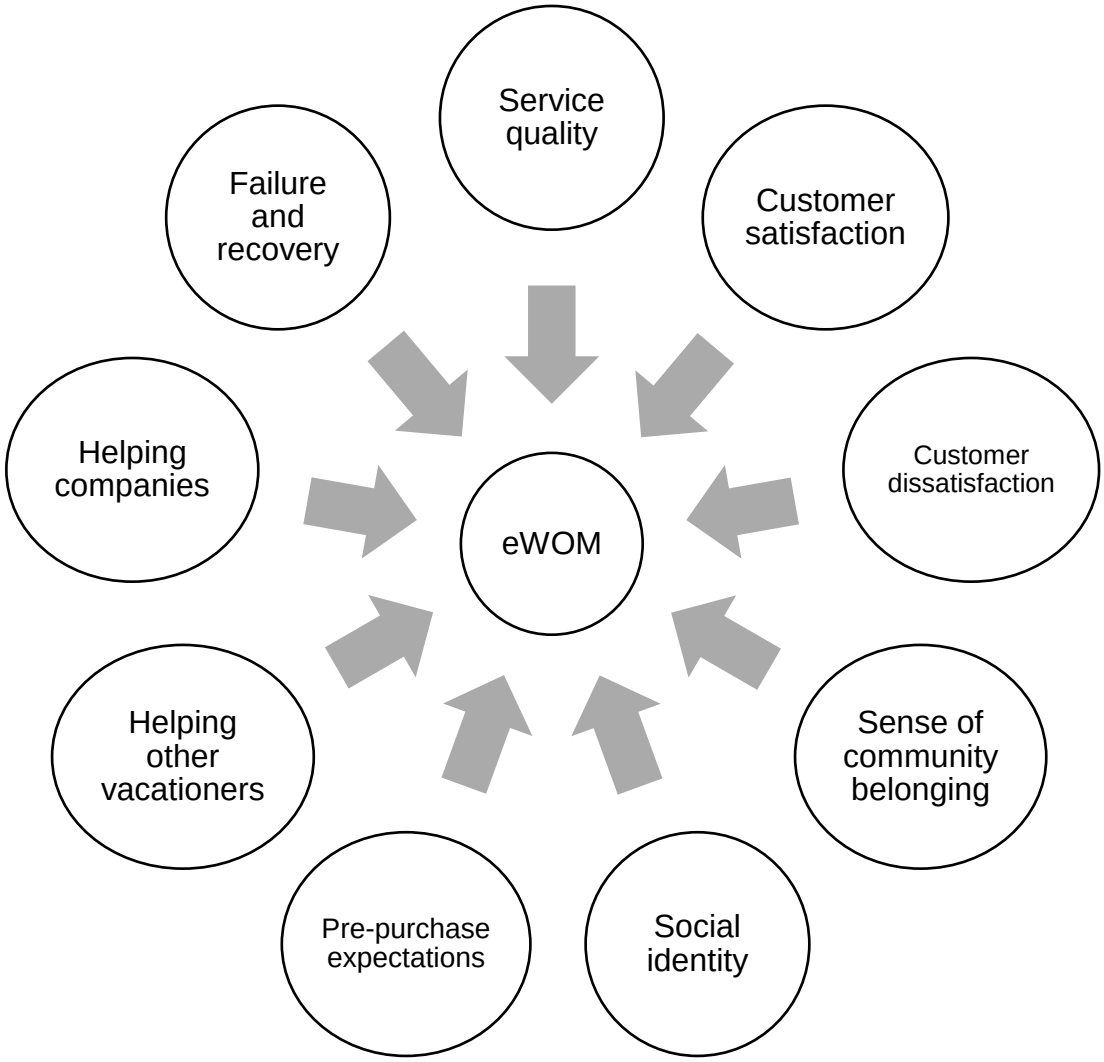
Figure 4. Impacts of eWOM



Source: Leong et al., 2019, p. 149.

Ladhari and Michaud (2015) argue that social network users care about each other's opinions. Social networks are also places where businesses display their profiles and services. Therefore, tourism businesses such as accommodation businesses will have the opportunity to showcase their businesses and respond to the positive and/or negative evaluations of real and potential guests by giving more importance to being on social networks and other online environments.

Figure 5: Review-generating Factors



Source: Leong et al., 2019, p. 149.

Figure 5 shows the factors that push people who travel to make online reviews. These factors not only inform potential vacationers who will demand the same products, but also serve as a feedback function for businesses that convey their experience as a consumer. The quality of the service provided leads people to make positive or negative reviews in online environments. It is thought that the level of pre-purchase expectation is also effective in these evaluations. Therefore, hotel businesses can learn the expectations, needs and wants of their guests in such environments and make arrangements to meet the expectations and requests of the guests. In addition, by adding a section to the website of the hotel business, positive reviews of guests staying at the hotel can be seen by other potential guests (Leong et al., 2019).

11.6 Managing Customer Reviews and Electronic Word-of-Mouth in Tourism and Hospitality Industries

Public relations provide communication with customers, investors, and other stakeholders. The basic issues of public relations are to understand the target audience, to have a communication strategy and to convey events with consistent messages. In the digital world, every transaction starts with a search. That is why digital silence cannot be an option for your business. Google, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter are some of the search media people use the most. These environments are important for running the business brand and protecting reputation online. Because customers are increasingly turning to digital channels. This causes businesses to both turn to digital channels and to change the method of protecting and increasing the reputation of the business (Ryan, 2014).

Public and stakeholder relationships are traditionally formed according to the culture of a business or organization. This method provides an environment that provides businesses with the opportunity to present their goods and services. On the other hand, it is clear that today we have entered a period of internet-based public relations. One of the prominent features of the Internet-based public relations approach is that people outside the company have more say in company management, public relations and marketing rules (Philips & Young, 2009).

Demand for travel and tourism related products fluctuates daily, weekly and seasonally. But, if a hotel's brand identity and customer experience can be distinguished significantly from those of its competitors, a stable demand rather than fluctuations can be achieved. Therefore, a good public relations process is critical (HSMAI, 201).

According to the digital toolbox prepared by the European Commission (2017, p. 13) for call and medium-sized hotel businesses, a hotel business can use the following posting checklist while preparing content on the internet:

1. 'Before writing (thinking ahead):

- ✓ What do you want to say?
- ✓ What is the purpose of your post?
- ✓ What angle will you take?

- ✓ Which audience are you writing for?
- ✓ How does your story relate to your audience's needs?

2. Readable (can they read your content?):

- ✓ Keep sentences simple, taking out unnecessary words and repetition.
- ✓ Keep your content short.

3. Understandable (can they understand what you are saying?):

- ✓ Choose the right content type – video, infographic, interactive, text, etc.
- ✓ Avoid using expressions and acronyms that others will not understand.

4. Actionable and Shareable (will they want to take action?):

- ✓ Include a call to action.
- ✓ Have a place for comments/interaction.
- ✓ Give your audience a reason to share! Make sure your content is shareable.
- ✓ Have links to related content.

5. After writing (take one last look):

- ✓ Go through your post again.
- ✓ Make sure there are no errors.

Many people buy their vacation online using websites for destination selection, price comparison, and information search. This situation not only saves time to spend with brochures, research and travel agencies, but also has an effect on reaching thousands of different consumers through a website (Philips & Young, 2009). However, Shuckert et al. (2015) conducted research on suspicious online reviews on TripAdvisor. According to the results of the research, it was determined that there is a difference between the general evaluations of low-star hotels, which are generally small and medium-sized, and the evaluations of sub-service dimensions. In addition, the rate of suspicious evaluations in the evaluations was determined as 20%. Therefore, it is an important issue of online public relations that hotel managers follow the reviews about their hotels on online platforms and provide the necessary answers.

In today's world where abnormality is experienced daily, it is essential to expect unexpected events. However, in the midst of a lot of noise, it is necessary to know which signs are relevant and which should be taken seriously. It is necessary to

determine what and to whom can be trusted. For this reason, it is necessary to draw a framework in order to understand the threats exposed on social media. Then, it is necessary to determine how these threats can affect the business itself and the reputation of the business (Pownall, 2015).

Although the actors in the tourism industry tend to concentrate on internet network services (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube), tourism businesses lack a comprehensive communication strategy. This makes it difficult to determine how the activities carried out by tourism enterprises are perceived by consumers. There are many examples of how a negative evaluation made by a single user on the Internet has a great impact on shaping thoughts about a large business (Horster & Gottschalk, 2012).

In the field of tourism, including the hospitality industry, online reputation anxiety has become a major driving force for businesses to improve goods and/or services (Gössling et al., 2018). The hospitality industry is trying to develop strategies for evaluations by customers, especially negative and/or bad reviews that will harm a hotel's reputation (Levy et al., 2013). In today's business world, the use of e-mail, newsgroups, wikis, chat, blogs, and other communication channels is common (Philips & Young, 2009). Hence, harming a company is no longer limited to people with the right connections. Threats that may harm the company can come from anyone at anytime, anywhere, and by any method causing the loss of reputation (Pownall, 2015).

There are two main components in a digital hotel marketing plan. The first is to monitor Online Travel Agency (OTA) sites in order to use, integrate and analyse digital information and metrics. Second, a hotel has a communication management strategy in order to respond to its own guests' reviews and to encourage them to do so (De Pelsmacker et al., 2018, p. 49). Perez-Aranda et al. (2019, p. 625) determined six dimensions that hotel managers should consider:

(i) defining the reputation field,
(ii) evaluating the hotel's ranking and category evaluations over time,
(iii) determination of the number of readers and the reach of the sharing,
(iv) comparison with competitors operating in the hotel industry,
(v) review of ranking methodologies, and
(vi) increasing the score affecting the hotel's reputation.

Table 1: Management of Online Reviews and Comments by Italian Hotel Managers

Question	Answers	%
How hotel managers consider eWOM	Not very important	7
	Very important	93
	Total	100
Who monitors online reputation	Only internal staff	82
	Internal staff helped by an external provider	9
	Only an external provider	3
	None	7
	Total	100
How long online reputation has been monitored	For six months	5
	For one year	17
	For two years	18
	For three years or more	60
	Total	100
How often hotel managers monitor online reputation	Every day	33
	Every week	47
	Every two weeks	9
	Every month	6
	Every three months	5
	Total	100
Hotel managers' interest in travel website algorithms and scores	Focus on both rankings and ratings	75
	Focus on rankings	8
	Focus on ratings	15
	Not interested in travel website algorithms and scores	2
	Total	100
How hotel managers consider a positive guest comment	An observation about hotel's strengths	64
	A third-party advertising	36
	Total	100
How hotel managers consider a negative guest comment	A source of information about hotel's weaknesses	86
	An attempt to bring discredit on the hotel	14
	Total	100

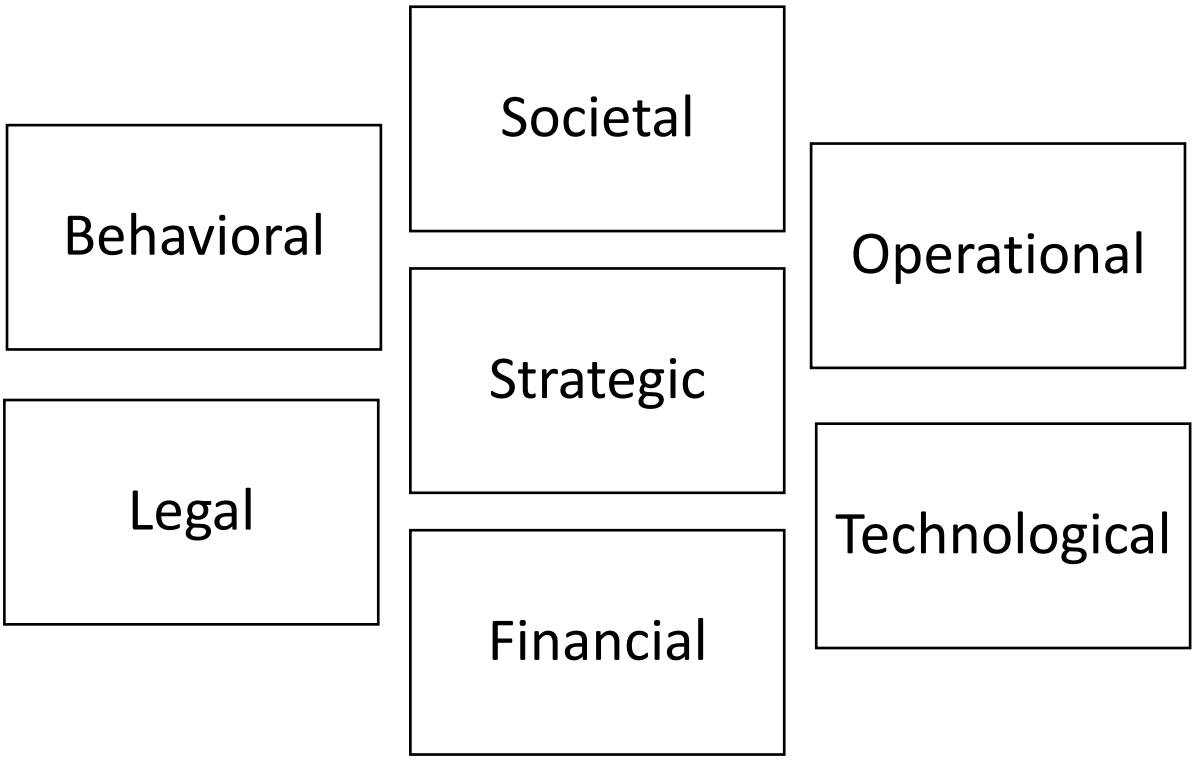
Source: Aureli and Supino, 2017, p. 95.

People evaluate both good and bad experiences they have. Of all the online evaluation in the hotel business, 80% of the evaluations are made up of 4 and 5 star hotels, while only 3% consists of 1 star hotels. For this reason, it is very important for hotel businesses to follow online evaluation platforms. Majority of evaluations (78%) in the field of tourism and hospitality are made on Booking.com, TripAdvisor, Google and Hotel.com (HSMAI, 2018).

Table 1 contains information on the practices of Italian hotel managers to monitor online reviews in online travel agencies and online evaluation sites. As Table 1 indicates, almost all (93%) of Italian hotel managers care about eWOM. The rate of hotel managers who stated that the evaluations related to hotels are followed up with

the staff working within the hotel is 82%. In addition, 9% of hotels receive external support for hotel evaluations in addition to hotel staff. However, 7% of hotel managers state that they do not follow online reviews about hotels. Majority of hotel managers (98%) pay attention to the ranking and voting scores of the online platforms where the evaluations about the hotels have taken place. A large proportion of hotel managers (84%) think that the negative reviews made about the hotels help to identify the weak points of the hotel (Aureli & Supino, 2017).

Figure 1: Categories of Risks to Reputation



Source: Pownall, 2015, p. 24.

Monitoring comments and posts in the social media is also critical for tourism and hospitality businesses. Figure 6 categorizes social media threats and their impact on companies' reputation. Strategic issues include the performance of the business and its reputation as a whole. Financial issues include loss of income of the business and/or business shareholders, increased capital costs, and a decrease in share values. Social issues include social, cultural, and environmental issues that will adversely affect the reputation of the enterprise when the expectations are not met in matters such as environmental pollution, health, food safety. Behavioural issues include behaviours by employees or partners of the business, such as unlawful or unethical

bribery, fraud, sexual harassment, and inequality of opportunity. Legal issues include intellectual property rights, violations of the law or legislative changes. Operational issues include the negativities that may occur in daily processes such as production, customer experience, supply chain management, employee health, and safety. Technological issues include system malfunctions, malicious or accidental theft, theft, destruction or disclosure of company and/or customer information and data (Pownall, 2015).

Tablo 2. Online Review Complaint Framework

Hotel Issues	Room Issues	Staff Issues
Check-In	Bathroom	Front desk
Restaurant	Cleanliness	Housekeeping
Parking	Noise	Bellhop
Billing	Room size	Concierge
Internet	Air conditioning	Maintenance
Look and feel	Smell	Doorman
Room service	Television	
Safety	Bedding and linens	
Location	Bugs	
Construction	Décor	
Booking	Bed	
Pool	Carpet and floor	
Elevator	View	
Smell	Minibar and refrigerator	
Vending machines	Amenities	
Gym	Heat	
Shuttle	Furniture	
	Towels	
	Walls	
	Window	
	Phone	
	Coffee	
	Lighting	
	Kitchen	

Source: Levy et al., 2013, p. 53.

Table 2 lists the complaints made by hotel guests on online channels (Levy et al., 2013). As a result of the analysis of online reviews, it is seen that the negative evaluations of the guests are concentrated on the hotel (e.g., Check in, Location, Elevator, Parking), room (e.g., Bathroom, Window, Walls, Lighting) and personnel (e.g., Front Desk, Housekeeping, Concierge, Maintenance). Park and Allen (2013) examined when and how hotel managers responded to online consumer comments. According to research results, hotels that respond to consumer comments are divided into two categories as regular and irregular. In addition, it has been determined that no response approach is adopted to the excessive negative or positive consumer comments. This indicates that hotel managers see consumer reviews as a mechanism that enables the identification and resolution of consumer problems.

Nine resorts and city destinations regarding online reputation of Airbnb facilities and services in Spain were examined by Moreno-Izquierdo et al. (2019). Using the hedonic price model, it was concluded that the online presence and online reputation of the accommodation facility has an effect on attractiveness and price. De Pelsmacker et al. (2018, p. 52) found that the following factors positively affect the hotel occupancy rate:

- 'Having a digital marketing plan
- The frequency of TripAdvisor information used
- Using TripAdvisor metrics
- Using management reports
- Answering guest reviews within 24 hours
- Using track software
- Integrating commercial review sites' reviews on the hotel website'.

Levy et al. (2013) advocates that hotels develop an online reputation management plan. The authors suggest that it should include two parts, objectives and strategies. Potential objectives might include the following (Levy et al., 2013, p. 58):

- 'Involving and encouraging more guests to write positive reviews.
- Climbing in the rankings of online review specialists such as TripAdvisor and Yelp.
- Improving overall review ratings of specific online review channels that are important to the hotel.

Strategies may involve the following:

- Using a reputation management system to actively monitor and respond to feedback.
- Actively soliciting online reviews from satisfied hotel guests.
- Using reviews to communicate with staff and improve operations.
- Responding to all reviews in a positive and personalized manner, and within a short period of time'.

A study was conducted by Alrawadieh and Dinçer (2019) on the negative evaluations made by guests within the scope of reputation management of luxury hotels operating in Jordan. As a result of the research, they concluded that luxury hotels do not have enough awareness about the harm of negative online reviews. In addition, it was found that only 246 of the 520 negative reviews were responded to, which is even less than half of the total number of negative reviews. Although positive reviews improve a business's reputation, negative reviews reduce the interest in the business's goods and services and thus reduce its profits (De Pelsmacker et al., 2018, p. 48). According to the online reputation management research conducted by Pollák et al. (2016) on the hospitality industry, hotel businesses should pay attention to not only have the websites related to the tourism industry (e.g., TripAdvisor, Booking), but also the websites that shape other internet networks and are frequently visited by people (e.g., Wikipedia, bloggers). The information on these websites can help remove negative or neutral comments about hotel businesses.

Some of the online evaluations made can be done for manipulation purposes. Therefore, both manipulation evaluations and strategies for managing and directing online consumer ideas can only be put forward by the management (Gössling et al., 2018). In the study conducted by Nicoli and Papadopoulou (2017) on the relationship between TripAdvisor and reputation in the hospitality industry, it was found that the speed of responding to online reviews is very important. Therefore, hotel managers should pay attention to consumer reviews so that consumer reviews do not damage the hotel's reputation.

Larson and Draper (2015) emphasize that a business should pay attention to two things while responding to online consumer reviews. The first is to act in a professional manner when responding to consumer evaluation. Thus, search engines

will find the content over and over again and contribute to the improvement of the rankings resulting from negative reviews. Second, the use of brand and/or product names in responses to consumer reviews should be avoided. Thus, when potential consumers search for the name of the business and/or the name of the product offered by the business, the ranking and appearance of websites with negative evaluations in the first place can be prevented.

In a study conducted by De Pelsmacker et al. (2018) on hotel businesses operating in Belgium, the effect of responding to guest reviews, monitoring and tracking online evaluation on performance indicators such as hotel occupancy rate and income per room was investigated. In the study, a comparison with the number of stars and independent hotels and chain hotels was considered. In this context, according to the results of the research conducted on 132 hotels, the number of reviews increases the occupancy rate. In addition, the quality of the evaluations made increases the hotel revenue. On the other hand, these results are more common in chain hotels and hotels with a high star rating rather than independent hotels.

It is very important for reputation management for hotel managers to manage reviews of their tourism and hospitality business in online rating sites. First of all, it is necessary to know what aspects of the business are commented and where they are said. For this, managers can opt for free tools (e.g., Google Alerts) as well as more advanced paid software (e.g., ReviewTrackers, ReviewPro, KePSLA). Secondly, after learning the reviews about their hotels, hotel managers need to analyse the online reviews of competitors and compare them with the reviews made about the hotels they manage. Thus, managers can have information about the strengths and weaknesses of their businesses. In the next stage of reputation management, the evaluations made by consumers need to be answered. At this point, answering all evaluations without making a choice between positive and negative evaluations is of great importance in terms of showing the consistency of the business. In the next stage, corrective steps should be taken, especially for negative evaluations, and improvements should be made in the products offered. Finally, tourism hospitality managers should encourage guests to review their hotel services online (Perez-Aranda et al., 2019).

11.7 Conclusion and Suggestions

The fact that the services offered by tourism enterprises cannot be experienced before consumption makes the evaluations of those who have experienced these services before important. People participating in tourism activity do a lot of research on the internet about many businesses and their goods and services before the trip, such as tourism destination they will go to, the hotel they will stay, the restaurant they will eat, the airline they will choose for transportation. As reviewed above, many researchers found that online reviews, comments and posts encountered during the research process are effective on consumers' choices. Therefore, managers of tourism and hospitality businesses monitor and manage online reviews and communications about the products offered by their business on different platforms on the internet. This requires a focus on online public relations and business reputation management in addition to the traditional public relations approach. In the context of tourism and hospitality businesses, a manager can develop a strategy regarding online reviews and reputation by answering the following questions:

- Do we have a plan for online guest reviews?
- Do we have staff assigned to monitor online guest reviews?
- What do we know about online reviews about our business?
- Do we follow online comments about our business?
- Do we analyse online reviews about our business?
- Is there a section on the website of our business where our guests can evaluate?
- Do we respond to online guest reviews about our business?
- What can we do to reduce the number of negative online reviews about our business?
- What can we do to increase the number of positive online reviews about our business?
- How and who will respond to negative online comments about our business?
- Do we follow the posts about our business on online evaluation sites and social media?

Today, people have the opportunity to share information on any subject at any time through their computers, tablets, and mobile phones connecting them to the internet. Consumers who move from passive position to active position can easily express their opinions, thoughts, satisfaction or complaints on any subject. There are many internet platforms where people's opinions are expressed. A post made on any of these platforms reaches a large number of people in a very short time. Therefore, it is unthinkable for business managers to ignore the internet environment where such a large amount of information is shared. In this context, it will be beneficial for the hotel manager, who answers the questions listed above, to pay attention to every sharing regarding the products offered by the hotel under their management, in terms of providing both guest satisfaction and competitive advantage. Otherwise, even a single share that is ignored may reach an unexpectedly great damage to the reputation of tourism and hospitality businesses. In addition, managers of tourism enterprises who monitors online consumer reviews should ensure that they take a proactive approach by knowing about customer complaints, expectations and wishes, as well as consumer trends.

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Assessment Questions

1. Which of the following is NOT one of the factors that push people make online reviews?

   a. Service quality

   b. Customer satisfaction

   c. Pre-purchase expectations

   d. Booking intention

   e. Social identity

2. Online reviews can positively or negatively influence the decision-making process of a potential hotel guest.

   a. False

   b. True

3. Put the following elements of communication process of the traditional marketing approach in order.

   A) Advertising/PR

   B) Customers

   C) Corporations

   D) Media-Public

   a. CBAD b. BACD **c. CADB** d. DABC e. BCAD

4. Place the appropriate concept in the blank of the following definition.

…….. is the dynamic and ongoing information exchange process between potential, actual, or former consumers regarding a product, service, brand, or company, which is available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet.

a. Reputation management
b. Electronic commerce
c. Public Relations
d. Word-of-mouth
e. Electronic word-of-mouth

5. Please match the concepts with the correct contents prepared by the European Commission for Small and Medium-Sized Hotel businesses.

a) Before writing — 1) Choose the right content type.
b) Understandable — 2) What do you want to say?
c) Actionable — 3) Go through your post again.
d) After writing — 4) Have a place for comments.

a. d3, c4, a2, b1 b. a1, b2, c3, d4 c. d2, b1, c3, a4 d. d1, a2, c3, b4

6. Digital transformation is not about the strategic use of technology, but about technology.

a. False
b. True

7. Put the following dimensions of hotel reputation management in order.

A) Comparison with competitors operating in the hotel industry
B) Evaluating the hotel's ranking and category evaluations over time
C) Defining the reputation field
D) Increasing the score affecting the hotel's reputation

a. BACD b. CBDA c. DACB **d. CBAD**

8. When a hotel business loses revenue due to negative online reviews, it represents a/an …….. damage to the hotel reputation.

a. technological b. societal **c. financial** d. behavioral e. legal

9. Please match the explanations with the correct terms.

a) RATIO	1) Number of recent reviews.
b) RATING	2) Number of reviews relative to the size of the property.
c) RECENCY	3) Frequency and quality of management responses to reviews
d) RESPONSE	4) User-generated score/rating of the property

a. a4, b2, c1, d3 b. c1, b2, d3, a4 c. b1, a2, d3, c4 **d. c1, a2, d3, b4**

10. Which of the following is among the strategies of an online reputation management plan that a hotel business will develop?

a. Using a reputation management system to actively monitor and respond to feedback.

b. Actively soliciting online reviews from satisfied hotel guests.

c. Using reviews to communicate with staff and improve operations.

d. Responding to all reviews in a positive and personalized manner, and within a short period of time.

e. All

CORRECT ANSWERS

1) d. Book intention
2) b. True
3) c. CADB
4) e. Electronic word-of-mouth
5) a. d3, c4, a2, b1
6) a. False
7) d. CBAD
8) c. financial
9) d. c1, a2, d3, b4
10) e. all

Module 12: Electronic Customer Relationship Management for Small and medium Sized Tourism Enterprises

Bahar Turkay,
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Learning Objectives

After reading this module, the reader will be able to:

- understand customer relationship management (CRM), electronic customer; relationship management (E-CRM) and types of e-crm;
- list the benefits of e-crm for small and medium sized tourism enterprises (SMTEs)
- remember the elements or components of E-CRM;
- analyse stages for managing electronic customer relationship management;
- remember e-crm tools and applications used in tourism and hospitality businesses;
- know the factors that need to be considered for implementing E-CRM.

12.0 Introduction

At the end of the 90's, Customer Relationship Management has become a very popular term both in academic and business life. With the arrival of the internet and communication and information technologies, new marketing and communication mediums, channels and new posts have emerged. Adaptation to these new changes has become very important for tourism and hospitality businesses. The availability of the Internet as a channel for communication and commerce enabled the business world to use the Internet as a CRM tool. With the development of the new technologies and the internet technologies, the concept of E-CRM emerged. The use of the internet for communication and commerce channel gave businesses the opportunity to apply the customer relationship management on the internet and other digital media, and this resulted in the adoption of electronic customer relations by the businesses. Customer relations management through internet and digital media, has become vital in tourism related businesses in order to meet customer expectations. E-CRM refers to all the

processes needed to achieve, build and maintain customer relationship through electronic business operations." (Khalifa and Shen, 2005, p. 1). E-CRM provides many advantages to companies to meet service expectations, satisfy customers and make them loyal on the internet environment, Especially SMTEs, which have a flexible structure, need to transfer their customer relations to the electronic environment and make use of digital marketing opportunities offered by the new information and communication technologies Managing customers and customer relations online is one of the important elements of digital marketing to create customer satisfaction and loyalty and gain competitive advantage.

The aim of this module is to introduce the concept of E-CRM and to explain its advantages and elements. The unit will also provide information on the stages of managing E-CRM, and introduce some of the main E-CRM tools such as website, property management systems, chatbots and live chat, business apps, and social media accounts that can be used by tourism and hospitality businesses for managing E-CRM. Besides, the module will also explain the critical factors to consider when implementing E-CRM.

12.1 Electronic Customer Relationship Management

Customer relationship management is a management approach developed from the relational marketing approach. Relational marketing approach calls for a close relationship with customers in a customer-oriented perspective (Reynolds 2002). In this respect, customer relationship management is the implementation of relationship marketing and customer orientation. CRM is a business strategy that consists of the use of technology and dynamic organizational processes in order to better manage exchange relationships with the customer (Erickson and McLaughlin, 2002). CRM refers to the "the process of storing and analysing large amounts of data that are actually purchased or collected and supposedly provide more insights into customer behaviour" (Yılmaz, 2006, p.5 quoting Hamilton, 2001). The E-CRM concept is "a managerial approach that aims to use electronic commerce applications in the process of initiating the company's transactions on the online platform" (Madeja and Schoder 2003, p. 181). E-CRM "involves e-commerce applications that aim to increase customer satisfaction, loyalty and profits by generating more revenue from customers" (Madeja and Schoder, 2003, p. 182). For example; The Ritz-Carlton, a luxury hotel

chain, saves guests' preferences for personalization to tailor the services they will receive on their next visit to other Ritz Carlton around the world; It records guest preferences compiled from the conversations they had with customers during their stay. The hotel records even the smallest customization points, for example; pillow preferences, room preferences, bedding preferences, and saves them for future use. Personalized data is created for regular customers to be used in their next stay (Chen and Popovich, 2003, Conlon, 1999). Customer relations in businesses start with the attitudes and behaviours that include all relations between the customer and the business. It starts when the prospective customer hears the name or brand of the company and continues with the establishment of a relationship with the business (Barsky, 1999). Previously, many businesses did not have enough information about their customers' needs, wants or dreams. But businesses have started to learn the ways and methods of taking advantage of technological developments to correct these weaknesses (Forrest, 2009). Especially, with the rapidly developing technologies and increased online buying behaviour of consumers, Businesses had to transfer customer relations management process to the electronic environment and it has become the new norm.

12.2 Types of Electronic Customer Relationship Management

There are two basic types of e-CRM: operational e-CRM and analytical e-CRM. Operational e-CRM is about managing customer contact points. It includes management of all communication methods and contact points with the customer such as personal, E-mail, telephone, mobile phone, web, and fax. Analytical e-CRM focuses on using technology to process and interpret large amounts of customer data. It can be said that web analytics tools and big data management technologies are very important in this regard (Dyche 2001, Yılmaz, 2006).

a) **Operational E-CRM:** It relates to customer contact points and phone calls made with the customer service centre of the enterprise. For example, a salesperson selling to the customer or outbound contact in the form of an e-mail promotion are considered within this scope. (Dyche, 2001, Fjermestad and Romano Jr, 2003)

b) Analytical E-CRM: It denotes CRM applications that require the use of technology in terms processing large number of customer data. In analytical E-CRM, where the place of consumer behaviour is very important, the main purpose is to create new business opportunities by analysing customer demographics, purchasing patterns and buying behaviour. (Dyche, 2001, Fjermestad and Romano Jr, 2003)

12.3 Benefits of Electronic Customer Relationship Management

If E-CRM applications are implemented and managed correctly and effectively it creates better customer services, and higher customer satisfaction which result in digital customer loyalty cycle and thus a permanent competitive advantage is gained. Table 1 gives a summary of how E-CRM may benefit businesses in general (Fjermestad and Romano Jr, 2003; Scullin et al.,2002, Curry and Kkolou, 2004, Agrawal, 2003, Croteau and Li 2003, Jutla et.al., 2001, Leigh and Tanner, 2004, Rigby, 2002, Chen and Popovich, 2003, Adebanjo, 2003, Yılmaz, 2006).

Table 1. Benefits of Electronic Customer Relationship Management

Benefits	Examples
✓ ***More Effective Marketing***	With detailed customer information obtained with E-CRM, businesses get the opportunity to predict the time of purchase and the kind of products consumers buy. Thus, businesses can easily monitor the effectiveness and target of the campaign. Ultimately, with E-CRM, customer data can be analysed from different angles to find out which components of the marketing campaign have the greatest impact on sales and profitability. Grouping customers based on similarities of need allows a business to effectively market certain products to members of certain groups.
✓ ***Increased hospitality by combining CRM / RM strategy***	Revenue streams and customer satisfaction can be better managed with E-CRM. By emphasizing recognition and personalization features of E-CRM, it is possible to reduce transaction costs meet special customer requests.
✓ ***Increased Customer retention and loyalty (With "Personalized Service")***	The information contained in the E-CRM system helps a business to accurately define the costs of acquiring and retaining individual customers. Having this knowledge saves time and directs its resources to the most profitable customers. Thus, businesses have the opportunity to manage their "best" customers more effectively as a premium group, by classifying their "best" customers and realizing that it is neither necessary nor reasonable to treat each customer in the same way. E-CRM enables businesses to personalize their services to customers thanks to the databases used. Customer loyalty can be easily increased with personal service delivery, which is very important especially in service scoring and tourism industries. It is possible to compare, classify and encode customer profiles that have become measurable, identifiable and searchable with databases. Providing personalized service in the tourism industries is not a new concept. Companies such as Ritz-Carlton and Savoy are continuing the comprehensive traditional sales channels model by striving to provide a good service to their best customers and recording customer requests.

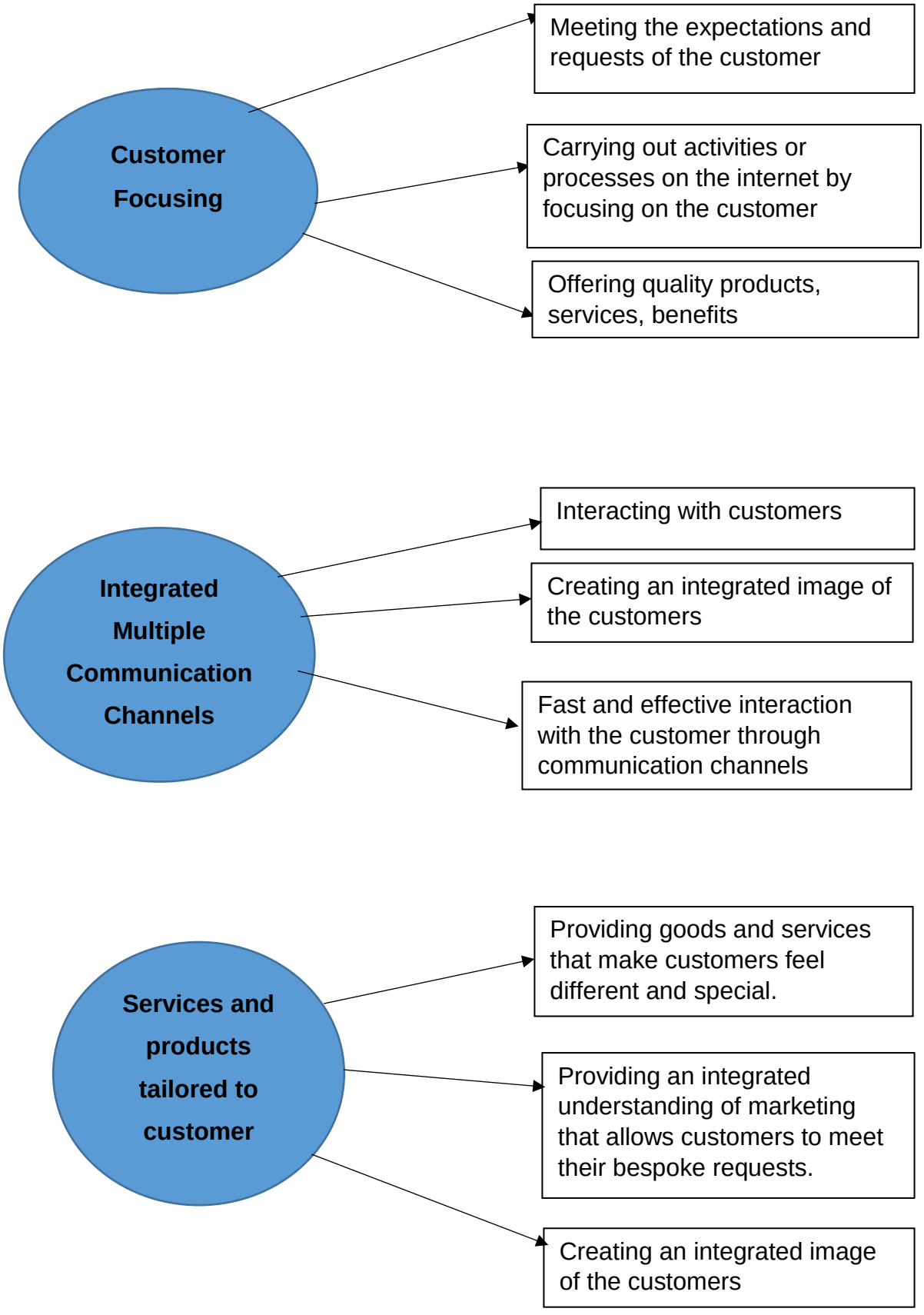
✓ ***Greater efficiency and cost reduction***	By collecting customer data as a whole in a single database, E-CRM facilitates the information sharing of marketing teams, sales forces and other departments in the business and provides a work towards common, integrated purposes. With better knowledge of distribution channels, relationships with customers become more effective and the cost of marketing campaign decreases.
✓ ***Improved customer service and support***	By applying E-CRM, businesses can automatically receive orders, reservations more accurately and have the opportunity to record the expenses related to service orders and the time of order and reservation. Businesses can easily see customer service requests and provide wider customer support thanks to E-CRM.
✓ ***Increased revenue by knowing the most profitable customers and providing them with superior service***	As the relationship with the customer develops, the profits for the business increase with the decreasing transaction costs and correct management of the processes and cross-selling and referrals.
✓ ***Transfer of some responsibility to the customer***	E-CRM transfers some responsibilities to the customer such as reservation, reservation tracking, product or service configurations, order, providing online customer information. Thus, operational and administrative costs are reduced.
✓ ***Improved sales***	E-CRM improves customer service; help cross-sell and up-sell, contribute to greater personalization of marketing messages, improve customers' self-service capabilities All of which may result in increased sales.
✓ ***Improved work flow***	E-CRM helps establish the best business processes and motivates staff to strengthen customer relationships
✓ ***Faster and Better Service***	With the filtering method of the website, it is ensured that the customers can reach the information they need more easily. It provides information in advance about what customers' requests. In this way, faster and more effective service delivery is provided.

✓ ***Team Coordination***	With the transfer of customer relations data to the electronic environment, the partners outside the enterprise and personnel have the opportunity to share consumer data and this results in better coordination among partners and employees.
✓ ***Reduced Customer Acquisition Costs***	Customer acquisition costs will decrease as savings will be made on services such as marketing, communication, and mail.
✓ ***Improved customer life-time value***	Better service can be provided by increasing the overall interaction with customers, thereby increasing customer satisfaction, customer lifetime value and loyalty.
✓ **Increase in customer retention rates**	Due to the improved and personalised service, customer satisfaction and loyalty may be increased

Source: Chen and Chen, 2004, Fjermestad and Romano Jr, 2003; Scullin et al., 2002, Curry and Kkolou, 2004, Agrawal, 2003, Croteau and Li 2003, Jutla et.al., 2001, Leigh and Tanner, 2004, Rigby, 2002, Chen and Popovich, 2003, Adebanjo, 2003, Yılmaz, 2006.

12.4 Elements of Electronic Customer Relationship Management

E-CRM consists of five components: customer fusing, products tailored to customer requests, integrated multiple communication channels, real-timeliness and Web-based approach (Akar, 2004; Hartman, Sifonis and Kador, 2002, E-Com, 1999, Luck and Lancaster, 2003). Figure 1 shows what each element means.


Customer Focusing
Meeting the expectations and requests of the customer
Carrying out activities or processes on the internet by focusing on the customer
Offering quality products, services, benefits
Integrated Multiple Communication Channels
Interacting with customers
Creating an integrated image of the customers
Fast and effective interaction with the customer through communication channels
Services and products tailored to customer
Providing goods and services that make customers feel different and special.
Providing an integrated understanding of marketing that allows customers to meet their bespoke requests.
Creating an integrated image of the customers

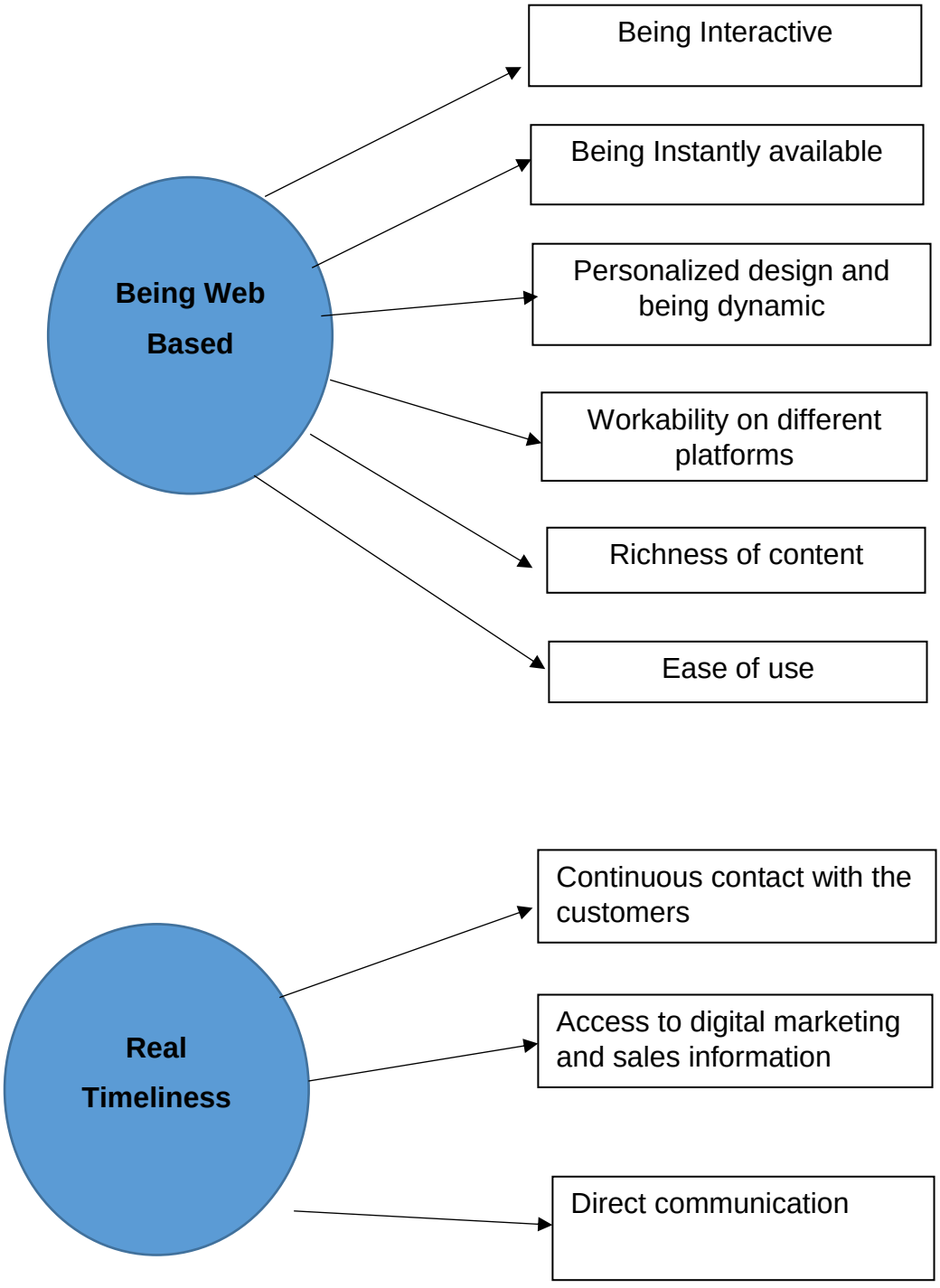


Figure 1. Elements of E-CRM, Akar, 2004; Hartman, Sifonis and Kador, 2002, E-Com, 1999, Luck and Lancaster, 2003.

12.5 Stages of Managing Electronic Customer Relationship Management

Customer relationship management is about human-organization and human-technology relationships. According to Kotorov (2002), there are three stages of e-CRM which involves the use of internet technologies.

STAGE 1: The main purpose of this phase is to personalize the relationship with the customer and then use this personalization to expand corporate feedback and response to customer needs. It includes customizing the relationship with the customer, customer recognition and proximity.

STAGE 2: In the second stage, there is customer relationship management which is also known as the 360-degree customer approach. It is possible to explain it as a more complex form of the first stage. it is the human-human model with technology support has been further increased. It focuses on customer purchasing patterns. The main idea of this model is to understand the customer. Collecting and analysing customer data; Thanks to new CRM technologies (CRM portals, data stores, prediction and analytical analysis, etc.), it has become easier. As a result of the analysis, the most suitable services and goods are recommended to customers. It is a model sensitive to demands.

STAGE 3: This stage is expressed in E-CRM and is not about what businesses secure, but how it ensures that services are related to the customer and are resolved on time and according to need. At this stage, the distinctive feature of CRM is the fusion of information and processes in the previous two stages. Activities take the form of being ubiquitous at the same time. Monitoring these processes will be very effective in increasing customer satisfaction in service businesses particularly.

12.6 Electronic Customer Relationship Management Tools for Small and Medium Sized Tourism Enterprises

E-CRM focuses on understanding consumer buying behaviour, creating superior value to customers and developing long term relationships with them with the help of technology. The management of e-customer relations combines people, technology and processes (Chen and Popovich, 2003, Yılmaz, 2006) (Figure 2). Businesses that tend to be ready for E-CRM applications are aware of contacts with

different customers, know how to manage customer requests, are very competitive and constantly seek differentiation (Ragins and Greco, 2003). E-CRM creates a more effective and efficient provision of goods and services and opportunity for businesses improvements. While customers carry out all kinds of transactions in a virtual environment, the E-CRM infrastructure enables faster service provision processes with fewer errors.

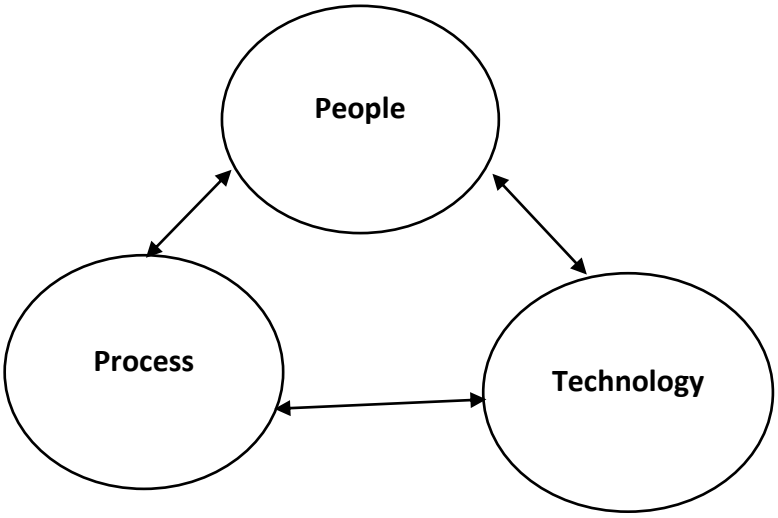


Figure 2. E-CRM Combination, Chen and Popovich, 2003, Yılmaz, 2006.

The main tools and E-CRM applications required for an effective electronic customer relationship management are listed in Table 3. The use of these tools and applications differs across industries and businesses.

Table 3: Tools of E-CRM

Search Engines	Network touch-point
Conference system	Internet content monitoring tools
Sales and order management	Mobile App
Website	Auto answer
E-mail	E-business content
Process automation	Call me button
VoIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol)	Live-help
E-forums	Multi language support

Source: Maddox and Blankenhorn, 1998, Durukal, 2017; Sivaraks, Krairit and Tang, 2011, p.142, www.E-CRMguide.com, Deniz, 2002, Akar, 2004.

In the context of tourism and hospitality businesses, the tools and applications that are often used for electronic customer relationship management are discussed below.

Websites

Tourism and hospitality businesses are in constant contact with customers before, during and after sales. For this reason, company website is a great tool to manage E-CRM. In order to manage E-CRM trough websites customer the relationship is usually analysed in three different stages representing online buying behaviour process in services: pre-sales, during sale and after sale support (Akar, 2003; Feinberg et.al, 2002, Feinberg and Kadam, 2002; Kotler and Armstrong, 1996; O'Connor, 2008; Collins, 1998). Using business website as an example of E-CRM tool, Table 2 shows each stage and the things to be done for the proper management of customer relationship through websites.

Table 2: Process of Electronic Customer Relationship Management for a Website

Pre-Sales Information (Especially: Website Features)	**Equipping websites with technologies such as video, audio, animation**
	Organizing websites according to **customer requests**
	Offering **alternative channels** such as e-mail and telephone lines that customers can reach
	Local search engines to reach visitors by entering the keyword what they are looking for on the website
	Creating a membership requesting username and password and basic information for customers
	Creating an address and contact list by asking visitors to add their e-mail addresses to the automatic e-mail list so that they can get more information.
Pre-Sales Information (Especially: Website Features)	**Payment method options** can play an important role in customer preferences. Therefore; an infrastructure that allows different payment methods should be created on the website. (credit card, bank transfer, mail order, payment on site etc.)
	Creating a **sitemap**
	Creating **chat and chat channels** that allow visitors to interact and at the same time create site content by allowing visitors to interact with the business.
	There should be **social media links** on the website
	There should be public materials on the website that inform customers such as annual **reports, articles, company newsletters and brochures** etc.
	Visitor forums
	Promotions, advertisements for the first users of the website
	Confirmation of product or service order by e-mail.
	Enabling website visitors to **purchase** goods and services **online**

	Enabling visitors to obtain product or service **information from the website**
During Sale- (e-commerce)	Offering products and services in a form that can be adapted to the **customer's wishes**
	Stating of purchase, warranty, return and all contract terms on the website
	Pre-showing the product or service (e.g., hotel room) to the customer in a picture or motion picture
Support After Sale	Designing websites so that customers can make **complaints online**
	Frequently asked questions (FAQ's) and their answers should be visible on the website. This feature refers to the self-help function that customers read or look at in response to their doubts or queries.
	Creating a platform where customers can **solve their problems online**
	Providing information that will enable the company to be recognized on the website
	The download speed of the site is important and should not be slow.
	Delivering quick order with **three-clicks** allowing you to control the product
	There should be detailed information on **privacy and the security system** on the website. Maintaining a **privacy policy** on the website, thereby giving the customer confidence in the protection of their information and protecting the company from perceived violations of privacy
	Online reputation management is important
	Online complaint management is important

Source: Akar, 2003; Feinberg et.al, 2002, Feinberg and Kadam, 2002; Kotler and Armstrong, 1996; O'Connor, 2008; Collins, 1998.

Property Management Systems for Hotels and Restaurants

Property management systems (PMS) are software tools for managing all operations of hotels and restaurants. All possible customer relations are managed through PMSs which integrate all departments, guest reservations, housekeeping, e-mails, maintenance and front desk operations.

Hotel management systems used in hotel businesses are important in terms of electronic customer relationship management. Some of the some of the most used property management systems for hotel are:

- **Opera Hotel Management System (PMS)**
  - Opera Central Reservation System (ORS)
  - Opera Customer Information System (OCIS)
  - Opera Multi Property
  - Opera Sales-Banquet Management (SC)
  - Opera Sales Force Automation (SFA)
  - Opera Web Service (OWS)
  - Opera Sales-Banquet Management (SC)
- **Fidelio Suite8 Hotel Management System**
- **Elektra**
- **Hotel Mobile System in Hotel Management**
- **SimpraPMS**
- **HotelRunner Property Management System**
- **Property Management System**
- **SabeeApp Property Management System**
- **Oracle Hotel Property Management System**
- **Frontdesk Anywhere**

- **Mister Booking**
- **Hotelogix**
- **eZee Absolute**
- **Guestline**
- **CloudBeds** (For free demo: https://www.cloudbeds.com/request-a-demo/)
- **Amonra** (Try for free version: https://www.amonra.com.tr/pms)

Restaurant management systems are the software systems for managing all restaurant and café operations. Below are some of the software systems for managing operations of Restaurant Automation for Restaurants, Cafés, and Patisseries:

- **Micros RES 3700 Restaurant Management and POS System**
- **Symphony Cloud-Based Restaurant Management and POS System**
- **The Maestro Property Management System** (For free demo: https://maestropms.com/index.html)
- **HMS (Hotel Management System)** (Try for free: https://hmschannelmanager.com/)
- **SevenRooms** (For free demo: https://sevenrooms.com/en/request-a-demo/)
- **WebRezPro** (For free demo: https://webrezpro.com/contact/)
- **Minihotel** (For free demo: https://minihotel.io/?utm_source=gAds-tier2&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIw63PscCCgIVWoxoCR2NuwokEAAYASAAEgKV6fD_BwE)

There are also systems and internet integrated **call centres** that integrate the hotel phone system with the Hotel Management Software (PMS), and there are programs that make it easier to manage customer relations and speed up many processes by establishing automation between the phone in the hotel room and the

hotel management software. These programs are very useful in increasing interaction with customers and providing instant solutions. (Yeastar IP-Santral, Nolto-Keep your business in touch etc…)

Live Chat and Chatbots Services

Live chat is a customer relationship channel that enables customers to have text and voice based online conversations with support personnel. **Chatbot** is a computer and internet-based service designed to simulate conversations with company personnel. It can match customer questions with predefined answers and thus become an effective customer relationship management channel. Users interact with the web pages and chat interfaces of tourism businesses, thus providing a continuous and easy communication channel thanks to a kind of artificial intelligence. By using this technology, small and medium-sized tourism enterprises can more easily collect data in their business processes and manage customer relations. These tools have many benefits such as interacting with customers, increasing the number of direct reservations, providing more comfortable communication and 24/7 service with a wide variety of language options, offering personal promotions by enabling personal experiences (https://www.revfine.com/ hotel-chatbot/).

Social Media Platforms and Accounts

Social media accounts of tourism and hospitality businesses are important channels that contribute to communicate with potential customers and develop customer relationships. Interaction with current and potential customers through social media accounts can provide valuable customer feedback and increase company awareness (Dulgaroğlu, 2021). Small and medium-sized tourism and hospitality businesses can also manage their electronic customer relations through these channels**. Social media accounts** play an active role in following and solving customer complaints, providing feedback, collecting and analysing data. More detailed information about the use of social media is given in a separate module.

Mobile Apps for Businesses

Businesses can create their own applications for interacting with their customers and marketing their goods and services. Business specific applications can be used for managing all the relationship and interaction with customers for managing E-CRM. There are also standalone applications that can easily be adopted by independent businesses. For example, Digital Menu Boar App can be used to design digital menus in your brand colours, add and remove items and images to create and update menus. Another standalone app is ALICE which can be used to manage all the customer relations within a hotel. Both personnel and guests can use it to communicate with each other. Freshbooks is another accounting mobile app that can be used by small hotels, restaurants and bars for creating invoices, tracking expenses, taking payments and reporting operations.

12.7 Implementing Electronic Customer Relationship Management

SMEs have a suitable structure for many CRM and E-CRM skills due to their flexible structure. SMEs are quite competent in terms of these factors, especially considering that customer focus and personalization play a leading role in the tourism sector. Although they have a more disadvantageous structure than large enterprises in terms of technology investments and resource investments, improvement can be achieved on these competencies with the following suggestions.

Lin (2007), created a model that showing CRM application factors and divided these factors into 3 groups. Within the CRM and E-CRM applications, based on this model, the skills and suggestions that SMEs can apply within these factors are compiled in the table

Table 4: Implementing CRM in SMTEs

ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS	
✓***Organizational Integration***	✓ One of the most essential factor and skill for SMTEs. ✓ All departments should work closely together and SMTEs have advantages for applying this. ✓ Integration is required to collect and manage customer information more effectively. ✓ Interaction between staff must be good and it's an advantage for easy management of customer information.
✓**System Readiness**	✓ Flexible operational processes should be established and staff actions should be able to be adjusted according to customer preferences. ✓ A motivating reward structure should be created. ✓ Employee performance measurements such as customer retention and profitability are carried out.
✓**Resource Availability**	✓ Technology resources should be invested in for the efficient use of customer information. ✓ Resources should be invested in human resources. ✓ Resources should be invested in financial resources. ✓ Trainings should be carried out in order to adopt the CRM and E-CRM concept to the company.
✓**Executive Commitment**	✓ Especially in small businesses, it is very important for the business owner to support their CRM application. ✓ Ensuring cooperation of employees and allocating the necessary resources for CRM and E-CRM should be done well.

STRATEGIC FACTORS	
✓ **Vision**	✓ All the components that are the focus for CRM should be clearly defined. ✓ Goals should be clear.
✓**Planning**	✓ A customer-oriented business strategy should be created. ✓ Planning and budgeting should be well thought out. ✓ Resource investments should be planned. ✓ By making multi-stage planning, the risks should be reduced with short-term goals.
✓**Customer-centric Culture**	✓ One of the most comfortable skills for SMEs is the ability to be customer-centric. ✓ Service design, marketing strategies should be customer focused.
CULTURAL FACTORS	
✓**Networking**	✓ Especially in terms of digital marketing applications, networking in SMEs is the most important skill in terms of customer and vendor relations. ✓ It's part of marketing and normal business tasks.
✓**Human Interaction**	✓ SMEs have a big advantage as they are closer and more with customer interaction and should use this to provide more personal service.

Source: This table has been compiled from Lin, 2007; Alonso, 2002; Iacovou et al., 1995; Sheth and Sisodia, 2001; Mclarty, 1999; Vermond, 2004; Chen and Popvich, 2003; Brendler and Loyle 2001; Fisher, 2002; Kotorov, 2003; Zontanos and Anderson, 2004; Levy and Powell 1998; Gilmore et all., 2001; Abbott, Stone and Buttle, 2001; Dibb, 2001; Compton, 2004; Gilmore et all.,1999; Kotter, 1995.

12.8 Electronic Customer Relationship Management Success Factors and Control Issues in Tourism and Hospitality Business

Tourism and hospitality businesses can make a checklist by paying attention to the following principles to succeed in electronic customer relationship management (Chaffey and Smith 2008, Çeltek, 2020, Labidi, 2005):

- ✓ Develop an electronic customer relationship management strategy and control results
- ✓ Get the most suitable software to collect and analyse data from customers.
- ✓ Set up interactive websites, so instant tracking of customers is easily provided.
- ✓ Prefer cloud-based software.
- ✓ Implement the necessary processes to provide excellent service that keeps customers coming back for more
- ✓ Encourage repeat visits to an application or website.
- ✓ Build reliable online platforms.
- ✓ Find the ideal software and make investments to protect existing customers
- ✓ Integrate your E-CRM applications with websites (such as booking.com)
- ✓ Stay up to date with e-marketing applications.
- ✓ Meet customer expectations using search engine optimizations.
- ✓ Make E-CRM applications a strategic tool for your business.
- ✓ Integrate E-CRM applications with the online platforms you use to better understand and manage customer relations in the long-term.
- ✓ Make your search tools user-friendly by using electronic brochures along with virtual ads and e-catalogues.
- ✓ Build platforms for your e-customers that allow them to receive services according to their own characteristics and expectations

12.9 Conclusions and Suggestions

The management approach, known as electronic customer relationship management (E-CRM), constitute an advanced dimension of the relational marketing approach that enables the processes to be controlled more easily with the use of information and communication technology and the internet. It is expected that E-CRM does not involve applications and tools used on the website only, but it also covers many areas of interaction with the customers with the support of technological tools. The E-CRM approach is critical for tourism businesses, especially for small and medium-sized tourism businesses as it gives direct communication and interaction with the customers, provides efficiency, and reduces costs.

Apart from the technological dimension of the E-CRM, it also requires adaptation in operational and organizational dimensions. Technology and infrastructural investments are also among the issues that businesses should address. It is obvious that with the establishment of the necessary infrastructure for E-CRM, tourism and hospitality businesses will improve service quality, customer satisfaction and increase profitability.

Data analysis is especially important for e-CRM applications in terms of facilitating information management and providing personalization in the service sector. Improving customer relationship over the Internet and digital channels is an activity that creates value for businesses and must be included in the value creation process. It will be useful to follow the instructions in this module in order to establish a trust-based relationship with customers and to create a strong e-CRM mechanism by acting customer-oriented.

Supplementary Resources

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZ_oNQ31fXs
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uASB79lNS6U
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FujVCOLrYyQ
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNjdkVanBH4
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nd0hxcGy6mc
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uASB79lNS6U

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Assessment Questions

1-Which of the following statements represent the best explanation for E-CRM?

a) All the processes needed to achieve, build and maintain customer relationship through electronic business operations

b) An application to increase profits by generating more revues from customers

c) It is a perspective that advocates short-term relationships with customers.

d) It is a software for managing personnel management

2-Which of the following is an element of E-CRM?

a) Customer focusing

b) Integrated multiple communication channels

c) Timeliness

d) All

3-Which of the following is a tool for E-CRM in tourism and hospitality management businesses

a) Internet content monitoring and tracking tools

b) Live online chat service

c) Property management system

d) All

4-Please order the following stages of a framework for managing E-CRM processes and activities

1) After sale support

2) Pre-sale

3) During sale

4) No sale

a) 1234 b) 4321 **c) 231** d) 213

5- An effective E-CRM, has a positive effect on efficiency and cost reduction

a) True b) False

6-Networking is an organizational factor that should be taken into consideration when implementing E-CRM

a) True **b) False**

7-Operational e-CRM is about managing customer contact points.

a) True b) False

8- Customer relationship management is also known as **……**

a) 360-degree customer approach

b) Organizational service orientation

c) Market penetration

d) Customer equity

9- ……. ……. focuses on using technology to process and interpret large amounts of customer data.

a) Operational E-CRM

b) Analytical E-CRM

c) Categorical E-CRM

d) Numerical E-CRM

10) Customer relationship management is a management approach developed from the …….

a) Competitive advantage approach

b) Vertical integration approach

c) Relational marketing approach

d) Resource based approach

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